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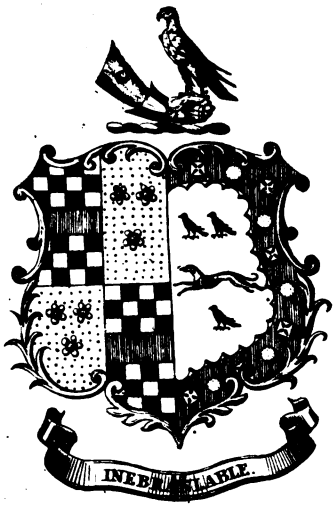

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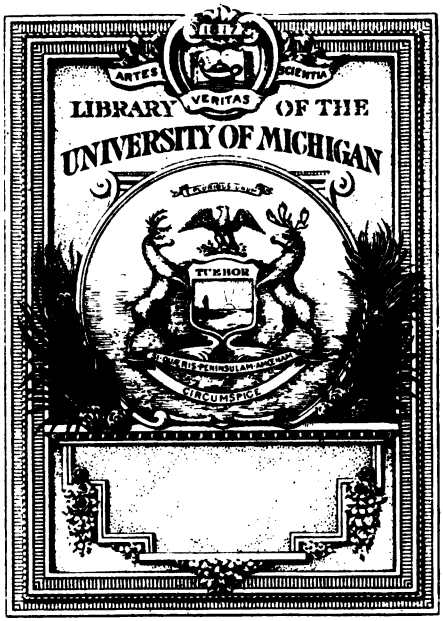
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THE

WORKS

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Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

EDINBURGH and GLASGOW:

Printed for G. HAMILTON & J. BALFOUR, W. SANDS, J. TRAILL, W. MILLER, and J. BROWN, *Edinburgh*; A. STALKER, *Glaſgow*; and T. GLAS, *Dundee*.

MDCCXLVIII.

The CONTENTS.

SERM. XLII. Against evil-speaking.——Tit. iii. 2. *To speak evil of no man* pag. 1

SERM. XLIII. XLIV. XLV. XLVI. Concerning the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.——John i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth* 24. 42. 68. 83

SERM. XLVII. Concerning the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, &c.——Heb. ix. 26. *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself* 101

SERM. XLVIII. Concerning the unity of the divine nature, and the blessed Trinity, &c.——1 Tim. ii. 5. *For there is one God* 122

SERM. XLIX. Concerning resolution and stedfastness in religion.——Josh. xxiv. 15. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* 144

SERM. L. Concerning family-religion.——Josh. xxiv. 15. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* 163

SERM. LI. LII. LIII. Of the education of children.——Prov. xxii. 6. *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it* 177. 196. 212

SERM. LIV. Of the advantages of an early piety.——Eccles. xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them* 230

The RULE of FAITH.

In answer to MR. SERJEANT.

The dedication to Dr. Stillingfleet 249

PART I.

The explication and state of the question.

Sect. I. The explication of the terms of the question 250
Sect. II. Mr. S.'s rule of faith 253

Sect. III. The Proteſtant doctrine concerning the rule of faith 258
Sect. IV. How much Proteſtants allow to oral tradition 266
Sect. V. How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than Proteſtants to theirs 273

PART II.

Concerning the properties of the rule of faith; and whether they agree ſolely to oral tradition.

Sect. I. The properties of a rule of faith 276
Sect. II. That the properties of a rule of faith belong to ſcripture 280
Sect. III. Mr. S.'s exceptions againſt ſcripture examined 284
Sect. IV. That ſcripture is a ſufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the moſt rational doubters 306
Sect. V. That ſcripture is ſufficient to convince the moſt acute adverſaries, and that it is ſufficiently certain 318
Sect. VI. That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition 323

PART III.

In which Mr. S.'s demonſtrations and corollaries are examined.

Sect. I. Conſiderations touching his demonſtrations in general 325
Sect. II. Mr. S.'s demonſtration *à priori* 329
Sect. III. The firſt anſwer to his demonſtration 331
Sect. IV. The ſecond anſwer to his demonſtration 339
Sect. V. The third anſwer to his demonſtration 342
Sect. VI. Mr. S.'s demonſtration *à poſteriori* 350
Sect. VII. The firſt anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration 352
Sect. VIII. The ſecond anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration 367
Sect. IX. The third anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration 369
Sect. X. The fourth anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration 389
Sect. XI. Concerning ſome other advantages of tradition, *&c.* 395
Sect. XII. Mr. S.'s corollaries conſidered 397

PART IV.

Teſtimonies concerning the rule of faith.

Sect. I. Mr. S.'s teſtimonies examined 400
Sect. II. Teſtimonies on the behalf of ſcripture 409

SER-

SERMON XLII.

Againſt evil-ſpeaking.

Preached before the King and Queen, at Whitehall, Feb. 25. 1693-4.

TIT. iii. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GENERAL perſuaſives to repentance and a good life, and invectives againſt ſin and wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend religion and virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a vitious courſe. But it muſt be acknowledged, on the other hand, that theſe general diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the lives of men; becauſe they fall among the crowd, but do not touch the conſciences of particular perſons in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner, as when we treat of particular duties and ſins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper arguments taken from the word of God, and from the nature of particular virtues and vices.

The general way is, as if a phyſician, inſtead of applying particular remedies to the diſtemper of his patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of health; and earneſtly perſuade him to be well, without taking his particular diſeaſe into conſideration, and preſcribing remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt take to taſk the great and common diſorders of their lives, and repreſent their faults to them in ſuch a manner, as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil-ſpeaking; by which men contract ſo much guilt to themſelves, and create ſo much trouble to others; and from

which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free: for *who is he* (ſaith the ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xix. 16.) *that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things* (ſaith St. James, chap. iii. 2.) *we offend all: and if any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

But how few have attained to this perfection? And yet unleſs we do endeavour after it, and in ſome good meaſure attain it, all our pretence to religion is vain. So the ſame Apoſtle tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

For the more diſtinct handling of this argument, I ſhall reduce my diſcourſe to theſe five heads.

1. I ſhall conſider the nature of this vice, and wherein it conſiſts.

2. I ſhall conſider the due extent of this prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man.*

3. I ſhall ſhew the evil of this practice, both in the cauſes and effects of it.

4. I ſhall add ſome further conſiderations to diſſuade men from it.

5. I ſhall give ſome rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I ſhall conſider what this ſin or vice of *evil-ſpeaking* here forbidden by the Apoſtle is: μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and ſlander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the etymology of the word doth import. So that this vice conſiſts in ſaying things of others which tend to their diſparagement and reproach, to the taking away or leſſening of their reputation and good name: and this, whether the things ſaid be true or not. If they be falſe, and we know it, then it is downright calumny; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a ſlander; and ſo much the more injurious, becauſe really groundleſs and undeſerved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be ſo, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: and it is a fault to ſay the evil of others which is true, unleſs there be ſome good reaſon for it beſides; becauſe it is contrary to that charity and goodneſs which Chriſtianity requires, to divulge the faults of others,

others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity, or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, It is *evil-ſpeaking*, and the vice condemned in the text, whether we be the firſt authors of an ill report, or relate it from others; becauſe the man that is evil ſpoken of is equally defamed either way.

Again, Whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back. The former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great fault, and that which we call *reviling*; the latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call *ſlander* or *backbiting*.

And, laſtly, Whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely, and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of commendation; for ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe. The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: for many times the deepeſt wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of ſlander; as by aſking queſtions: "Have you "not heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more; "I only aſk the queſtion:" or by general intimations, that "they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch "a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe "it," if you will believe them: and this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe, and ſuch like arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing mens reputation; yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of ſlander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what faſhion a ſlander is dreſſed up; if it tend to defame a man, and to diminiſh his reputation, it is the ſin forbidden in the text.

II. We will conſider the extent of this prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man*, and the due bounds and limitations of it. For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and

in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The queſtion is, In what caſes by the general rules of ſcripture and right reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity; as for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to ourſelves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xix. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not;* that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal caſes wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this prohibition in the text.

1. It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this, in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be ſo fit for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other uſe of this diſcovery, but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of charity, that it is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it, he may reform. In this caſe the ſon of Sirach adviſeth to reveal mens faults, Ecclus xix. 13. 14. 15. *Admoniſh a friend,* (ſays he), *it may be he hath not done it: and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admoniſh thy friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it: and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again. Admoniſh a friend: for many times it is a ſlander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell

tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner, as if we did it to ſhew our authority, rather than our charity. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application, ſo to manage the buſineſs of reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

2. This likewiſe is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the publick good, or the prevention of ſome great evil, ſhould require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtify a voluntary accuſation. Otherwiſe it hath always among well-mannered people been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward informer concerning the miſdemeanor of others. Magiſtrates may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: but they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents.

But when a man is called to give teſtimony in this kind, in obedience to the laws, and out of reverence to the oath taken in ſuch caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

3. It is lawful to publiſh the faults of others, in our own neceſſary defence and vindication, when a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency. No charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed, to ſave the reputation of another man. Charity begins at home. And though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concerned for other mens. We are *to love our neighbour as ourſelves;* ſo that the love of ourſelves is the rule and meaſure of our love to our neighbour: and therefore firſt, otherwiſe it could not be the rule. And it would be very well for the world, if our charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

4. This alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a

third perſon that is in danger to be infected by the company or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: but even in this caſe we ought to take great care, that the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no further than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable caſes, this prohibition doth not I think hinder, but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be; or that one friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice; provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others: and the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports, and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are all the uſual caſes in which it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable, that the prohibition in the text cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like caſes, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world would be very quiet. I proceed, in the

III. Third place, To conſider the evil of this practice, both in the cauſes, and the conſequences of it.

1. We will conſider the cauſes of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil roots.

1*ſt*, One of the deepeſt and moſt common cauſes of *evil-ſpeaking*, is ill-nature, and cruelty of diſpoſition; and, by a general miſtake, ill-nature paſſeth for wit, as cunning doth for wiſdom; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as vice and virtue.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneneſs of men to this vice: for (as our Saviour ſays) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide; which

ſhews

ſhews human nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The wit of man doth more naturally vent itſelf in ſatyre and cenſure, than in praiſe and paneg yrick. When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men. But in the way of invective, the invention of men is a plentiful and never failing ſpring. And this kind of wit is not more eaſy, than it is acceptable: it is greedily entertained, and greatly applauded; and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lie down, and make ſport for others.

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all companies: and the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt meetings and viſits, after the neceſſary ceremonies and compliments are over, is, to ſit down and backbite all the world. It is the ſauce of converſation; and all diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of piquancy and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſome body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleaſed with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: though, at the ſame time, they have ſo much juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much wit as to conclude, that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another place and company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another party, and that differs from us in matters of religion; in this caſe, all parties ſeem to be agreed, that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the reputation of their adverſaries. And though they all pretend to be Chriſtians, and the diſciples of him who taught nothing but kindneſs, and meekneſs, and charity; yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſavage and murderous diſpoſition they will fly at one another's reputation, and tear it in pieces: and whatever other ſcruples they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections

objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? "It is very well (ſay they) "if it be true; I ſhall be glad to hear it confirmed: I "never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a "good man yourſelf, but have a care you be not de-"ceived."

Nay, it is well, if, to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other ſcale, that ſo the enemy may not go off with flying colours.

But, on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial author of an ill report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, though all are to blame this way: *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the zealots of all parties have got a ſcurvy trick of lying for the truth.

But of all ſorts of people, I have obſerved the prieſts and bigots of the church of Rome to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt faith for a luſty falſhood and calumny. Others will bandy a falſe report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a lie, and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. John in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that ill-nature lies at the root of this vice, is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: and which is yet more ill-natured and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it ourſelves, we tell it to others, with this charitable caution, that we hope it is not true: but, in the mean time, we give it our paſs, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

2dly, Another cauſe of the commonneſs of this vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others, is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our bleſſed Saviour, ſpeaking of the evil of the laſt days, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of charity among men, Matth. xxiv. 12. *Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall*

ſhall wax cold. When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

3*dly*, Another ſource of this vice, is malice and revenge. When men are in heat and paſſion, they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpiteful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them; and when they are blinded by their paſſions, they lay about them madly, and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay, many are ſo deviliſh, as to invent and raiſe falſe reports, on purpoſe to blaſt mens reputation. This is a diabolical temper; and therefore St. James tells us, that the ſlanderous *tongue is ſet on fire of hell:* and the devil hath his very name from calumny and falſe accuſation; and it is his nature too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil ſpirit among men: nay, the ſcripture tells us, that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good men before God, as he did Job, charging him with hypocriſy to God himſelf, *who* (he knows) *does know the hearts of all the children of men.*

4*thly*, Another cauſe of evil-ſpeaking, is envy. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their reputation obſcures them, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their virtues may not ſcorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the ruins of other mens reputation: and therefore, as ſoon as they have got an ill report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently go to ſend it abroad by the firſt poſt: for the ſtring is always ready upon their bow to let fly this arrow, with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through city and

and country; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould overtake it.

5thly, Another cauſe of evil-ſpeaking, is impertinence and curioſity; an itch of talking and meddling in the affairs of other men, which do no ways concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a piece of news, as the faults and follies of men, or any bad thing that is talked of in good company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill ſtories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next company that is worthy of them: and this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of ſomething better to talk of, and becauſe their parts lie chiefly that way.

6thly, Laſtly, Men do this many times out of wantonneſs, and for diverſion. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's reputation is too great and tender a concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous tongue *bites like a ſerpent, and wounds like a ſword.* For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's life, than to play with his honour and reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the reputation of others much better than themſelves, and this only to divert themſelves and the company. Solomon compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons: *As a madman* (ſaith he) *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*, (the LXX render it, *ſo is the man that defameth his neighbour*), *and ſaith, Am not I in ſport?* Such and ſo bad are the cauſes of this vice. I proceed to conſider, in the

2. Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious conſequences and effects of it; both to others, and to ourſelves.

1ſt, To others; the parties I mean that are ſlandered. To them it is certainly a great injury, and commonly a high provocation, but always matter of no ſmall grief and trouble to them.

It is certainly a great injury, and, if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though

though we ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their vindication; yet that makes but very little amends, becauſe the vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the reproach, and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after ill impreſſions are once made. The ſolicitous vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an after game; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill, than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by playing it.

I will add one thing more, that it is an injury that deſcends to a man's children and poſterity; becauſe the good or ill name of the father is derived down to them: and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them, is the reputation of his unblemiſhed virtue and worth. And do we make no conſcience to rob his innocent children of the beſt part of this ſmall patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their father's ſake, if his reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtained? Is it no crime, by the breath of our mouth, at once to blaſt a man's reputation, and to ruin his children, perhaps to all poſterity? Can we make a jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? of an injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe, in ſuch a caſe, no repentance will be acceptable without reſtitution, if it be in our power? And perhaps it will undo us in this world to make it; and, if we do it not, will be our ruin in the other.

I will put the caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the ſlander is true; yet no man's reputation is conſiderably ſtained, though never ſo deſervedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter, by paſſing through ſeveral hands, is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add ſomething to it.

But, beſides the injury, it is commonly a very high provocation: and the conſequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and deſperate quarrels. This reaſon the wiſe ſon of Sirach gives why we ſhould defame no man, Ecclus xix. 8. 9. *Whether it be* (ſays he) *to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and obſerved thee,*

(that

(that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge), *and when the time cometh he will ſhew his hatred;* that is, he will take the firſt opportunity to revenge it.

At the beſt, it is always matter of grief to the perſon that is defamed. And Chriſtianity, which is the beſt natured inſtitution in the world, forbids us the doing of thoſe things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit even of a wiſe and good man: and the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more ſenſible is he of this hard uſage; becauſe he never treats others ſo, nor is he conſcious to himſelf that he hath deſerved it.

2*dly*, The conſequences of this vice are as bad or worſe to ourſelves. Whoever is wont to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe whom he deſires to pleaſe; who, if they be wiſe enough, will conclude, that he ſpeaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: and were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themſelves, no man could be ſo blind as not to ſee this.

And it is very well worthy of our conſideration which our Saviour ſays in this very caſe, Matth. vii. 2. that *with what meaſure we mete to others, it ſhall be meaſured to us again;* and that many times heaped up and running over: for there is hardly any thing wherein mankind do uſe more ſtrict juſtice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing.*

Nay, revenge often goes farther than words. A reproachful and ſlanderous ſpeech hath coſt many a man a duel, and in that the loſs of his own life, or the murder of another, perhaps with the loſs of his own ſoul. And I have often wondered, that among Chriſtians this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of theſe great miſchiefs ſhould happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways: for no man knows, in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good-will he may come to ſtand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own ſafety and quiet, he ought to refrain from evil-

ſpeaking:

ſpeaking: Pſal. xxxiv. 12. 13. *What man is he* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourſelves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expreſsly tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* And St. Paul puts ſlanderers and revilers amongſt thoſe that *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. And our bleſſed Saviour hath told us, that *by our words we ſhall be juſtified, and by our words we ſhall be condemned.* To which I will add the counſel given us by the wiſe man, (Wiſdom of Solomon, chap. i. 11.), *Refrain your tongue from backbiting: for there is no word ſo ſecret, that ſhall go for nought; and the mouth that ſlandereth, ſlayeth the ſoul.* I proceed, in the

IV. Fourth place, to add ſome further arguments and conſiderations to take men off from this vice: As,

1. That the uſe of ſpeech is a peculiar prerogative of man above other creatures, and beſtowed upon him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe; that by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit; not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The Pſalmiſt, as by interpreters is generally thought, calls our tongue our *glory*; therewith we *praiſe God* and *bleſs men*. Now, to bleſs is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of ſpeech, and turn our glory into ſhame, when we abuſe this faculty, to the injury and reproach of any.

2. Conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſy obligation; but not to ſpeak ill requires only our ſilence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others. The expence deters many from this kind of charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might af-

ford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him; eſpecially if it be conſidered how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous and reproachful word.

3. Conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good-will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him; and when he is dead, men will praiſe him. And, next to piety towards God, and righteouſneſs to men, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely, heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular character of a Roman Gentleman, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere:* "He knew not what it was to give any man an ill "word."

4. Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy conſcience, man, and ſay, whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word; and to have thy faults concealed; and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable, than that known rule, "What thou wouldſt have "no man do to thee, that do thou to no man."

5. When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lie open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no occaſion, no example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free, either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other. Even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among men, have ſome little vanity or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious wit: therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon ourſelves, and look into that part of the wallet which men commonly

monly fling over their ſhoulders, and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own faults; and, when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our Saviour's rule, *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

6. Laſtly, Conſider, that it is in many caſes as great a charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent advice which the ſon of Sirach gives to this purpoſe, Ecclus xix. 10. *Talk not of other mens lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burſt thee.* I ſhall, in the

V. Fifth and laſt place, give ſome rules and directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

1. Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. Whenever you poſitively accuſe and indite any man of any crime, though it be in private and among friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your oath, becauſe God ſees and hears you. This, not only charity, but juſtice, and regard to truth, do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill report, is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it: for though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a lie. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon common fame, which for the moſt part is falſe; but almoſt always uncertain, whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: but if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench nine parts in ten of the evil-ſpeaking that is in the world.

2. Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs? and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? and how will you then be aſhamed, when you re-

flect upon it; and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe, that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether, in the chance of human affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of your's towards him will render you of it? and whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

3. Let us accuſtom ourſelves to pity the faults of men, and to be truly ſorry for them; and then we ſhall take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common humanity requires of us; conſidering the great infirmities of human nature, and that we ourſelves alſo are liable to be tempted; conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a puniſhment every fault and miſcarriage is to itſelf, and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this world and the other. He is not a good Chriſtian, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt enemies; and if he be ſo, he will diſcover them no farther than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

4. Whenever we hear any man evil-ſpoken of, if we know any good of him, let us ſay that. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part, to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you have heard of them may not be true; but it is much more probable, that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: however, it is better to preſerve the credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil-ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad qualities ſhould be mentioned together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and an indifferent man may be made a monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a wiſe man, but his overſights and follies; nothing in a good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould heap

heap together all the paſſionate ſpeeches, all the froward and imprudent actions of the beſt man, all that he had ſaid or done amiſs in his whole life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his wiſdom and virtues; the man, in this diſguiſe, would look like a madman or a fury: and yet, if his life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led, and his many and great virtues ſet over againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the world to be an admirable and excellent perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill qualities are, it is but juſt, that, with all this heavy load of faults, he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real virtues that are in him.

5. That you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to buſybodies, and thoſe that love to talk of other mens faults: or, if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their quality, then divert the diſcourſe ſome other way; or if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it, you may ſufficiently ſignify that you do not like it.

6. Let every man mind himſelf, and his own duty and concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thyſelf, and it will be work enough for one man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When Plato withdrew from the court of Dionyſius, who would fain have had a famous philoſopher for his flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and Dionyſius bade him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was returned into Greece. Plato told him, He had no leiſure for it; meaning, that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the world.

7. Laſtly, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak finely, but fitly. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of whom, and what thou art going to ſpeak. Uſe great caution and circumſpection in this matter. Look well about thee, on every ſide of the thing, and on every perſon in the company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which, when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; or ſo ſtiff in converſation, as to drop nothing but aphoriſms and oracles. Eſpecially among equals and friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved, as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a man had the underſtanding of an angel, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of wiſdom, for fear of being thought cunning. The true art of converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this caution is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end, we ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſhed with matter of diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others. And, if we have but a mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a field large enough for innocent converſation, ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of mankind. And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool, to gratify any body whatſoever?

I have done with the five things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this argument. But, becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it; I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three pleas that may be made for it.

1. Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it. But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian religion forbids revenge. Therefore do not plead one ſin in excuſe of another, and make revenge an apology for reviling.

2. It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this doctrine were practiſed, converſation would be ſpoiled, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant diſcourſe and entertainment.

I anſwer, The deſign of this diſcourſe is, to redreſs a great evil in converſation, and that, I hope, which

mends

mends it, will not ſpoil it. And however, if mens tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of ourſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. David, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent receipt, in his opinion, for a quiet, and chearful, and long life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking: Pſal. xxxiv. 12. 13. *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in invective, I hope there is a great deal more in innocence: and the more any man conſiders this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are ſerious, we ourſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himſelf impartially before the ſacrament, or is put in mind upon a deathbed, to make reparation for injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the bleſſed ſacrament, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

3. There is yet a more ſpecious plea than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill, if they can eſcape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this doctrine did effectually take place: becauſe by this means, one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men, who are ſo bent upon reforming the world, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of God, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from men: beſides that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many faults which the laws of men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way, to puniſh one fault by another. But let no man encourage himſelf in an evil way, with this hope that he ſhall eſcape the cenſure of men. When I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the world to chaſtiſe them that do ill: and though we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad

bad tongues enough to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wiſh we could but be perſuaded to make the experiment for a little while, whether men would not be ſufficiently laſhed for their faults, though we ſat by and ſaid nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good men ſhould be concerned in this odious work. There will always be offenders and malefactors enough to be the executioners to inflict this puniſhment upon one another. Therefore let no man preſume upon impunity on the one hand; and, on the other, let no man deſpair, but that this buſineſs will be ſufficiently done one way or other. I am very much miſtaken, if we may not ſafely truſt an ill-natured world that there will be no failure of juſtice in this kind.

And here, if I durſt, I would have ſaid a word or two concerning that more publick ſort of obloquy by lampoons and libels, ſo much in faſhion in this witty age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible ſort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be ſaid without offence, that how much ſoever men are pleaſed to ſee others abuſed in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn. However, I cannot but hope, that every man that impartially conſiders, muſt own it to be a fault of a very high nature, to revile thoſe whom God hath placed in authority over us, and to ſlander the footſteps of the Lord's anointed; eſpecially ſince it is ſo expreſsly written, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

Having repreſented the great evil of this vice, it might not now be improper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occaſions for the future; and ſo turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making ſo good an uſe of it; and then it will be well for us to have been evil ſpoken of.

Are we innocent? We may ſo much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the pattern of our bleſſed Saviour, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

We may conſider likewiſe, that though it be a misfortune

tune to be evil ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore ſhould not put us into paſſion; becauſe another man's being injurious to me, is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſy to myſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon ourſelves. Let no man's provocation make thee to loſe thy patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one virtue, becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious, as to endeavour to rob thee of the reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as Plato ſaid he would do in that caſe, "live "ſo, as that no body may believe them."

All that now remains, is, to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and myſelf to do accordingly: for all is nothing if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our duty. Many are ſo taken up with the deep points and myſteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the Chriſtian religion hath made them inſeparable. True faith is neceſſary in order to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one never ought to be preſſed to the prejudice of the other.

I foreſee what will be ſaid, becauſe I have heard it ſo often ſaid in the like caſe, that there is not one word of Jeſus Chriſt in all this. No more is there in the text. And yet I hope that Jeſus Chriſt is truly preached, whenever his will and laws, and the duties injoined by the Chriſtian religion, are inculcated upon us.

But ſome men are pleaſed to ſay, that this is mere morality. I anſwer, That this is ſcripture morality and Chriſtian morality; and who hath any thing to ſay againſt that? Nay, I will go yet farther, that no man ought to pretend to believe the Chriſtian religion, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a duty, and in the practice of a ſin ſo clearly condemned by it, as this of evil-ſpeaking is.

But becauſe *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged ſword*, yea ſharper than calumny itſelf, and pierceth the very hearts and conſciences of men, laying us open to ourſelves, and convincing us

of

of our more ſecret, as well as our more viſible faults; I ſhall therefore at one view repreſent to you what is diſperſedly ſaid concerning this ſin in the holy word of God.

And I have purpoſely reſerved this to the laſt, becauſe it is more perſuaſive and penetrating than any human diſcourſe. And to this end, be pleaſed to conſider in what company the Holy Ghoſt doth uſually mention this ſin. There is ſcarce any black catalogue of ſins in the Bible, but we find this among them; in the company of the very worſt actions and moſt irregular paſſions of men. Matth. xv. 19. *Out of the heart* (ſays our Saviour) *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, falſe-witneſs, evil-ſpeakings.* And, Rom. i. 29. 30. the Apoſtle ranks *backbiters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God;* and with thoſe of whom it is expreſsly ſaid, 1 Cor. vi. 10. that *they ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

And when he enumerates the ſins of *the laſt times*, *Men* (ſays he, 2 Tim. iii. 2. 3.) *ſhall be lovers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters, evil-ſpeakers, without natural affection, perfidious, falſe-accuſers*, &c. And, which is the ſtrangeſt of all, they who are ſaid to be guilty of theſe great vices and enormities, are noted by the Apoſtle to be great pretenders to religion: for ſo it follows in the next words; *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and yet at the ſame time to live in a moſt palpable contradiction to the precepts of that holy religion; as if any pretence to myſtery, and I know not what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of Chriſt, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and ſet them above the virtues of a good life.

And now, after all this, do we hardly think that to be a ſin, which is in ſcripture ſo frequently ranked with murder, and adultery, and the blackeſt crimes; ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the life and power of religion, and will certainly ſhut men out of the kingdom of God? Do we believe the Bible to be the word of God; and can we allow ourſelves in the common practice of a ſin, than which there is hardly any fault of mens lives more frequently

quently mentioned, more ſeverely reproved, and more odiouſly branded in that holy book?

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe texts: Pſal. xv. 1. *Who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our Saviour ſays, that *of every idle word we muſt give an account in the day of judgment;* that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned?* What can be more ſevere than that of St. James: *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain?*

To conclude: The ſin which I have now warned men againſt, is plainly condemned by the word of God; and the duty which I have now been perſuading you to, is eaſy for every man to underſtand; not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of God, to practiſe; and moſt reaſonable for all men, but eſpecially for all Chriſtians, to obſerve. It is as eaſy as a reſolute ſilence upon juſt occaſion; as reaſonable as prudence, and juſtice, and charity, and the preſervation of peace and good-will among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſable an obligation as the authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which conſiderations, let us every one of us be perſuaded to take up David's deliberate reſolution, Pſal. xxxix. 1. *I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that, would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one fault, we ſhould ſoon be better men in our whole lives; I mean, that the correcting of this vice, together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may, at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care, be corrected, would make us owners of a great many conſiderable virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagined, that a man that makes conſcience of his words ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his actions. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon, of that ſaying of St. James, and with which I ſhall conclude, *If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

Now

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and *work to do his will, working in you* always *that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Concerning the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

An Advertisement to the Reader.

THE following sermons were preached several years ago in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in London; and, being now revised and enlarged by the author, are here made publick. The true reason whereof was not that which is commonly alledged for printing books, the importunity of friends; but the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of others, whom the author heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better minds; and to grant that the ensuing discourses, the publication whereof was in so great a degree necessary, may by his blessing prove in some measure useful.

SERMON XLIII.

Concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 30. 1679.

John i. 14.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

The first sermon on this text.

THese words contain in them three great points concerning our blessed Saviour, the author and founder of our faith and religion.

1. His

1. His incarnation: *The Word was made* (or became) *fleſh.*

2. His life and converſation here among us: *And dwelt among us,* ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *he pitched his tabernacle amongſt us;* he lived here below in this world, and, for a time, made his reſidence and abode with us.

3. That in this ſtate of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilſt he appeared as a man, and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious teſtimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God; and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,* &c.

I ſhall begin with the firſt of theſe, his incarnation, as moſt proper for this ſolemn time, which hath for many ages been ſet apart for the commemoration of the nativity and incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour. *The Word was made fleſh;* that is, he who is perſonally called *the Word,* and whom the Evangeliſt St. John had ſo fully deſcribed in the beginning of this goſpel, he became fleſh; that is, aſſumed our nature, and became man. For ſo the word *fleſh* is frequently uſed in ſcripture for man, or human nature: Pſal. lxv. 2. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come;* that is, to thee ſhall all men addreſs their ſupplications. Again, Iſ. xl. 5. 6. *The glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together;* that is, all men ſhall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, *All fleſh is graſs,* ſpeaking of the frailty and mortality of man. And ſo likewiſe, in the New Teſtament, our bleſſed Saviour, foretelling the miſery that was coming upon the Jewiſh nation, ſays, Matth. xxiv. 22. *Except thoſe days ſhould be ſhortened, no fleſh ſhould be ſaved;* that is, no man ſhould eſcape and ſurvive that great calamity and deſtruction which was coming upon them: Gal. ii. 16. *By the works of the law* (ſays the Apoſtle) *ſhall no fleſh* (that is, no man) *be juſtified.*

So that by *the Word's being made* (or becoming) *fleſh,* the Evangeliſt did not intend that he aſſumed only a human body without a ſoul, and was united only to a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris and his followers; but that he became man, that is, aſſumed the

whole human nature, body and ſoul. And it is likewiſe very probable, that the Evangeliſt did purpoſely chuſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of man, to denote to us, that the Son of God did aſſume our nature, with all its infirmities, and became ſubject to the common frailty and mortality of human nature.

The words thus explained, contain that *great myſtery of godlineſs*, as the Apoſtle calls it, or of the Chriſtian religion, *viz.* the incarnation of the Son of God, which St. Paul expreſſeth by the appearance or manifeſtation of God in the fleſh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And without controverſy great is the myſtery of godlineſs, God was manifeſted in the fleſh;* that is, he appeared in human nature, he became man; or, as St. John expreſſeth it in the text, *The Word was made fleſh.*

But, for the more clear and full explication of theſe words, we will conſider theſe two things.

1. The perſon that is here ſpoken of, and who is ſaid to be incarnate, or to be *made fleſh*, namely, the Word.

2. The myſtery itſelf, or the nature of this incarnation, ſo far as the ſcripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

Firſt, We will conſider the perſon that is here ſpoken of, and who is ſaid to be incarnate, or to be *made fleſh*, and who is ſo frequently in this chapter called by the name or title of *the Word*, namely, the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for ſo we find him deſcribed in the text: *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c.; that is, ſuch as became ſo great and glorious a perſon as deſerves the title of *the only begotten Son of God.*

For the explaining of this name or title of *the Word*, given by St. John to our bleſſed Saviour, we will conſider theſe two things.

1. The reaſon of this name or title of *the Word*, and what probably might be the occaſion why this Evangeliſt inſiſts ſo much upon it, and makes ſo frequent mention of it.

2. The deſcription itſelf, which is given of him under

der this name or title of *the Word* by this Evangeliſt, in his entrance into his hiſtory of the goſpel.

I. We will inquire into the reaſon of this name or title of *the Word* which is here given to our bleſſed Saviour by this Evangeliſt; and what might probably be the occaſion why he inſiſts ſo much upon it, and makes ſo frequent mention of it. I ſhall conſider theſe two things diſtinctly and ſeverally.

1. The reaſon of this name or title of *the Word* here given by the Evangeliſt to our bleſſed Saviour. And he ſeems to have done it in compliance with the common way of ſpeaking among the Jews, who frequently call the Meſſias by the name of *the Word of the Lord.* Of which I might give many inſtances; but there is one very remarkable, in the Targum of Jonathan, which renders thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, which the Jews acknowledge to be ſpoken of the Meſſias, *viz. The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,* &c.; I ſay, it renders them thus: *The Lord ſaid unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand,* &c. And ſo likewiſe Philo the Jew calls him by whom God made the world, *the Word of God,* and *the Son of God.* And Plato probably had the ſame notion from the Jews; which made Amelius the Platoniſt, when he read the beginning of St. John's goſpel, to ſay, "This barbarian agrees with Plato, ranking the "Word in the order of principles;" meaning, that he made the Word the principle or efficient cauſe of the world, as Plato alſo hath done.

And this title of *the Word* was ſo famouſly known to be given to the Meſſias, that even the enemies of Chriſtianity took notice of it. Julian the Apoſtate calls Chriſt by this name: and Mahomet, in his Alcoran, gives this name of *the Word* to Jeſus the ſon of Mary. But St. John had probably no reference to Plato, any otherwiſe than as the Gnoſticks, againſt whom he wrote, made uſe of ſeveral of Plato's words and notions. So that, in all probability, St. John gives our bleſſed Saviour this title with regard to the Jews more eſpecially, who anciently called the Meſſias by this name.

2. We will, in the next place, conſider what might probably be the occaſion why this Evangeliſt makes ſo frequent mention of this title of *the Word,* and inſiſts

ſo much upon it. And it ſeems to be this; nay I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, ſince the moſt ancient of the fathers, who lived neareſt the time of St. John, do confirm it to us.

St. John, who ſurvived all the Apoſtles, lived to ſee thoſe hereſies which ſprang up in the beginnings of Chriſtianity, during the lives of the Apoſtles, grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and diſturbance of the Chriſtian religion; I mean the hereſies of Ebion and Cerinthus, and the ſeveral ſects of the Gnoſticks, which began from Simon Magus, and were continued and carried on by Valentinus and Baſilides, Carpocrates and Menander. Some of which expreſsly denied the divinity of our Saviour, aſſerting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of exiſtence before he was born of the bleſſed virgin; as Euſebius and Epiphanius tell us particularly concerning Ebion: which thoſe who hold the ſame opinion now in our days may do well to conſider from whence it had its original.

Others of them, I ſtill mean the Gnoſticks, had corrupted the ſimplicity of the Chriſtian doctrine, by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the Jewiſh Cabbaliſts, and of the ſchools of Pythagoras and Plato, and of the Chaldean philoſophy, more ancient than either; as may be ſeen in *Euſebius de præparat. evan.*; and, by jumbling all theſe together, they had framed a confuſed genealogy of deities, which they call by ſeveral glorious names, and all of them by the general name of *Æons* or *Ages*; among which they reckoned Ζωὴ, and Λόγος, and Μονογενὴς and ἰ λήρωμα, that is, *the Life*, and *the Word*, and *the Only Begotten*, and *the Fulneſs*, and many other divine powers and emanations which they fancied to be ſucceſſively derived from one another.

And they alſo diſtinguiſhed between the maker of the world, whom they called the God of the Old Teſtament, and the God of the New; and between Jeſus and Chriſt; Jeſus, according to the doctrine of Cerinthus, as Irenæus tells us, being the man that was born of the virgin; and Chriſt, or the Meſſias, being that divine power or ſpirit which afterwards deſcended into Jeſus, and dwelt in him.

If it were poſſible, yet it would be to no purpoſe, to go

go about to reconcile theſe wild conceits with one another, and to find out for what reaſon they were invented, unleſs it were to amuſe the people with theſe *high ſwelling words of vanity*, and a pretence of *knowledge falſely ſo called*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, in alluſion to the name of Gnoſticks, that is to ſay, *the men of knowledge*; which they proudly aſſumed to themſelves, as if the knowledge of myſteries of a more ſublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In oppoſition to all thoſe vain and groundleſs conceits, St. John, in the beginning of his goſpel, chuſes to ſpeak of our bleſſed Saviour, the hiſtory of whoſe life and death he was going to write, by the name or title of *the Word*, a term very famous among thoſe ſects; and ſhews, that this *Word of God*, which was alſo the title the Jews anciently gave to the Meſſias, did exiſt before he aſſumed a human nature, and even from all eternity; and that to this eternal Word did truly belong all thoſe titles which they kept ſuch a canting ſtir about, and which they did with ſo much ſenſeleſs nicety and ſubtilty diſtinguiſh from one another, as if they had been ſo many ſeveral emanations from the Deity. And he ſhews, that this *Word of God* was really and truly *the Life*, and *the Light*, and *the Fulneſs*, and *the Only Begotten of the Father*: ℣ 4. *In him was the life, and the life was the light of men*; and, ℣ 5. *And the light ſhineth in darkneſs, and the darkneſs comprehended it not*; and, ℣ 6. 7. 8. 9. where the Evangeliſt, ſpeaking of John the Baptiſt, ſays of him, that *he came for a witneſs, to bear witneſs of the light*; and that *he was not that light, but was ſent to bear witneſs of that light*: *and that light was the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man*; and ℣ 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*; and ℣ 16. *And of his fulneſs we all receive*, &c. You ſee here is a perpetual alluſion to the glorious titles which they gave to their Æons, as if they had been ſo many ſeveral deities.

In ſhort, the Evangeliſt ſhews, that all this fanciful genealogy of divine emanations, with which the Gnoſticks made ſo great a noiſe, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all theſe glorious titles did really

meet in the Meſſias, who is the Word, and who before his incarnation was from all eternity with God, partaker of his divine nature and glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, becauſe the knowledge of it ſeems to me to be the only true key to the interpretation of this diſcourſe of St. John concerning our Saviour under the name and title of *the Word*. And ſurely it is a quite wrong way for any man to go about by the mere ſtrength and ſubtilty of his reaſon and wit, though never ſo great, to interpret an ancient book, without underſtanding and conſidering the hiſtorical occaſion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal miſtake of Socinus, to go to interpret ſcripture merely by criticizing upon words, and ſearching into all the ſenſes that they are poſſibly capable of, till he can find one, though never ſo forced and foreign, that will ſave harmleſs the opinion which he was beforehand reſolved to maintain, even againſt the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the text which he undertakes to interpret; juſt as if a man ſhould interpret ancient ſtatutes and records by mere critical ſkill in words, without regard to the true occaſion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and inſight into the hiſtory of the age in which they were written.

I ſhall now proceed to the ſecond thing which I propoſed to conſider, namely,

II. The deſcription here given of the Word by this Evangeliſt in his entrance into his hiſtory of the goſpel: *In the beginning* (ſays he) *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The ſame was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In which paſſage of the Evangeliſt four things are ſaid of the Word which will require a more particular explication.

1. That *he was in the beginning.*
2. That *he was in the beginning with God.*
3. That *he was God.*
4. That *all were made by him.*

1. That *he was in the beginning;* ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the

the ſame with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, *from the beginning*, 1 John i. 1.; where, ſpeaking of Chriſt by the name of *eternal life*, and of *the word of life*, *That* (ſays he) *which was from the beginning*. Nonnus, the ancient paraphraſt of St. John's goſpel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being *in the beginning*, adds, that he was ἀχρόνως, *without time*; that is, before all time: and if ſo, then he was from all eternity. *In the beginning was the Word*; that is, when things began to be made he was; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exiſt before any thing was made; and conſequently is without beginning, for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being. And ſo the Jews uſed to deſcribe eternity, *before the world was*, and *before the foundation of the world*; as alſo in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament. And ſo likewiſe Solomon deſcribes the eternity of Wiſdom, Prov. viii. 22. 23. &c. *The Lord* (ſays he) *poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: then I was by him as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him.* And ſo Juſtin Martyr explains this very expreſſion of St. John, that he was, or had a being before all ages. So likewiſe Athenagoras, a moſt ancient Chriſtian writer: "God, (ſays "he), who is an inviſible mind, had from the begin-"ning the Word in himſelf."

2. That *in the beginning the Word was with God*. And ſo Solomon, when he would expreſs the eternity of Wiſdom, ſays, *it was with God*: and ſo likewiſe the ſon of Sirach ſpeaking of Wiſdom, ſays, it was μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, *with God*. And ſo the ancient Jews often called the *Word of God*, "the Word which is before the Lord;" that is, with him, or in his preſence. In like manner the Evangeliſt ſays here, that the *Word was with God*; that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his happineſs and glory. To which our Saviour refers in his prayer, John xvii. 5. *Glorify me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*. And this *being with God* the Evangeliſt oppoſeth to his *appearing* and *being manifeſted* to the world, ℣. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew*

knew him not; that is, he who from all eternity was *with God*, appeared in the world; and when he did ſo, though he had made the world, yet the world would not own him. And this oppoſition between his *being with God*, and his *being manifeſted* in the world, the ſame St. John mentions elſewhere, 1 John i. 2. *We ſhew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.*

3. That *he was God.* And ſo Juſtin Martyr ſays of him, That "he was God before the world;" that is, from all eternity. But then the Evangeliſt adds by way of explication, *The ſame was in the beginning with God;* that is, though the Word was truly and really God, yet he was not God the Father, who is the fountain of the Deity, but an emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity *with him;* to denote to us, that which is commonly called by divines, and for any thing I could ever ſee properly enough, the diſtinction of perſons in the Deity; at leaſt we know not a fitter word whereby to expreſs that great myſtery.

4. That *all things were made by him.* This ſeems to refer to the deſcription which Moſes makes of the creation, where God is repreſented creating things by his word, Gen. i. *God ſaid, let there be light, and there was light:* and ſo likewiſe the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth.* And ſo St. Peter alſo expreſſeth the creation of the world, 2 Pet. iii. 5. *By the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth made out of water.* And in the ancient books of the Chaldeans, and the verſes aſcribed to Orpheus, the maker of the world is called *the Word*, and *the divine Word.* And ſo Tertullian tells the Pagans, that by their philoſophers the maker of the world was called Λόγος, *the Word*, or *Reaſon.* And Philo the Jew, following Plato, who himſelf moſt probably had it from the Jews, ſays, that the world was created by the *Word;* whom he calls *the name of God*, and *the image of God*, and *the Son of God:* two of which glorious titles are aſcribed to him, together with that of *maker of the world*, by the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews: *In theſe laſt days* (ſays he) *God hath ſpoken to us by his Son, by whom*

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alſo he made the worlds: who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon. And to the ſame purpoſe St. Paul, ſpeaking of Chriſt, Coloſ. i. 15. 16. 17. calls him *the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature;* that is, born before any thing was created; as does evidently follow from the reaſon given in the next words why he called him *the firſt-born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things ſubſiſt.* From whence it is plain, that by his being *the firſt-born of every creature,* thus much at leaſt is to be underſtood, that he was before all creatures, and therefore he himſelf cannot be a creature, unleſs he could be before himſelf. Nay, the Apoſtle ſays it expreſsly in this very text in which he is called *the firſt-born of every creature,* (or *of the whole creation*), that *he is before all things;* that is, he had a being before there was any created being, he was before all creatures both in duration and in dignity; for ſo muſt he of neceſſity be, if *all things were made by him;* for as the maker is always before the thing which is made, ſo is he alſo better, and of greater dignity.

And yet I muſt acknowledge, that there ſeems to be no ſmall difficulty in the interpretation I have given of this expreſſion in which Chriſt is ſaid by the Apoſtle to be *the firſt-born of every creature,* or of the whole creation; becauſe in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech the firſt-born is of the ſame nature with thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born: and if ſo, then he muſt be a creature as well as thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born. This is the objection in its full ſtrength, and I do own it to have a very plauſible appearance: and yet I hope, before I have done, to ſatisfy any one that will conſider things impartially, and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the ſcope of the Apoſtle's reaſoning in this text, and compare it with other parallel places of the New Teſtament, that it neither is, nor can be the Apoſtle's meaning in affirming Chriſt to be *the firſt-born of every creature,* to inſinuate that the Son of God is a creature.

For how can this poſſibly agree with that which follows,

lows, and is given as the reaſon why Chriſt is ſaid to be *the firſt-born of every creature*, namely, becauſe *all things were made by him?* The Apoſtle's words are theſe: *The firſt-born of every creature*, (or *of the whole creation*); *for by him all things were created:* but now, according to the Socinian interpretation, this would be a reaſon juſt the contrary way: for if *all things were created by him*, then he himſelf is not a creature.

So that the Apoſtle's meaning in this expreſſion muſt either be, that the Son of God, our bleſſed Saviour, was before all creatures, as it is ſaid preſently after, that *he is before all things*; and then the reaſon which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *He is before all things*, becauſe *all things were created by him*. In which ſenſe it is very probable, that the Son of God elſewhere calls himſelf *the beginning of the creation of God*, Rev. iii. 14. meaning by it, as the philoſophers moſt frequently uſe the word ἀρχὴ, the *principle* or efficient cauſe of the creation: and ſo we find the ſame word which our tranſlation renders *the beginning*, uſed together with the word *firſt-born*, as if they were of the ſame importance, Coloſ. i. 18. *the beginning and firſt-born from the dead*; that is, the principle and efficient cauſe of the reſurrection of the dead.

Or elſe, which ſeems to me to be the moſt probable, and indeed the true meaning of the expreſſion, by this title of *the firſt-born of every creature*, the Apoſtle means, that he was lord and heir of the creation: for the firſt-born is natural heir; and Juſtinian tells us, that *heir* did anciently ſignify *lord*: and therefore the ſcripture uſes theſe terms promiſcuouſly, and as if they were equivalent. For whereas St. Peter ſays of Jeſus Chriſt, that *he is Lord of all*, Acts x. 36.; St. Paul calls him *heir of all things*, Rom. iv. 13.; and then the reaſon given by the Apoſtle why he calls him *the firſt-born of every creature*, will be very fit and proper, becauſe *all things were created by him*. For well may he be ſaid to be lord and heir of the creation, who *made all things that were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*.

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we conſider, that the Apoſtle to the Hebrews (who, by ſeveral of the ancients, was thought to be St. Paul, where he gives

gives to Chriſt ſome of the very ſame titles which St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians had done, calling him *the image of God*, and *the maker of the world*) does, inſtead of the title of *the firſt-born of every creature*, call him *the heir of all things*: and then adds, as the reaſon of this title, that *by him God made the worlds*. *God* (ſays he) *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things: who being the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, and upholding all things by the word of his power*, &c. Which is exactly parallel with that paſſage of St. Paul to the Coloſſians, where Chriſt is called *the image of the inviſible God*; and where it is likewiſe ſaid of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do ſubſiſt*. Which the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, in different words, but to the very ſame ſenſe, expreſſeth by his *upholding all things by the word of his power*; that is, by the ſame powerful word by which all things at firſt were made: but then, inſtead of calling him *the firſt-born of every creature*, becauſe *all things were made by him*, he calls him *the heir of all things, by whom God alſo made the worlds*.

And indeed that expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every creature* cannot admit of any other ſenſe which will agree ſo well with the reaſon that follows, as the ſenſe which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *heir and lord of the whole creation*, becauſe *all creatures were made by him*; which exactly anſwers thoſe words of the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, *whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds*.

And now I appeal to any ſober and conſiderate man, whether the interpretation which I have given of that expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every creature*, be not much more agreeable both to the tenor of the ſcripture, and to the plain ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle's argument and reaſoning in that text?

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe it is the great text upon which the Arians lay the main ſtrength and ſtreſs of their opinion, that the Son of God is a creature, becauſe he is ſaid by the Apoſtle to be *the firſt-born of every creature*; by which expreſſion, if no more be meant than that he is heir and lord of the whole creation, which I have ſhewed to be very agreeable both to

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the uſe of the word *firſt-born* among the Hebrews, and likewiſe to the deſcription given of Chriſt in that parallel text which I cited out of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, then this expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every creature* is nothing at all to the purpoſe either of the Arians or the Socinians, to prove the Son of God to be a creature: beſides that the interpretation which I have given of it makes the Apoſtle's ſenſe much more current and eaſy; for then the text will run thus, who *is the image of the inviſible God, heir and lord of the whole creation; for by him all things were made.*

So that, in theſe four expreſſions of the evangeliſt, which I have explained, there are theſe four things diſtinctly affirmed of the Word.

1. That *he was in the beginning*; that is, that he already was, and did exiſt, when things began to be created. He was before any thing was made, and conſequently is without any beginning of time; for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being.

2. That in that ſtate of his exiſtence before the creation of the world, he was partaker of the divine glory and happineſs. And this I have ſhewed to be the meaning of that expreſſion, *And the Word was with God*: for thus our bleſſed Saviour does explain his *being with God* before the world was, *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

3. That *he was God*: *And the Word was God*; not God the Father, who is the principle and fountain of the Deity. To prevent that miſtake, after he had ſaid that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next verſe, *The ſame was in the beginning with God.* He was God, by participation of the divine nature and happineſs together with the Father, and by way of derivation from him, as the light is from the ſun; which is the common illuſtration which the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church give us of this myſtery; and is perhaps the beſt and fitteſt that can be given of it. For, among finite beings, it is not to be expected, becauſe not poſſible, to find any exact reſemblance of that which is infinite, and conſequently incomprehenſible; becauſe whatever

whatever is infinite, is for that reaſon incomprehenſible by a finite underſtanding, which is too ſhort and ſhallow to meaſure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it, will ſoon find himſelf out of his depth.

4. That *all things were made by him:* which could not have been more emphatically expreſſed, than it is here by the Evangeliſt, after the manner of the Hebrews; who, when they would ſay a thing with the greateſt force and certainty, are wont to expreſs it both affirmatively and negatively; as, *He ſhall live, and not die*; that is, he ſhall moſt aſſuredly live: So here, *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made:* that is, he made all creatures without exception; and conſequently he himſelf is not a creature, becauſe it is evidently impoſſible that any thing ſhould ever make itſelf: but then, if he be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all eternity.

All theſe aſſertions are plainly and expreſsly contained in this deſcription which the Evangeliſt St John here makes of the Word: and this according to the interpretation of theſe expreſſions by the unanimous conſent of the moſt ancient writers of the Chriſtian church; who, ſome of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate diſciples of St. John: which ſurely is no ſmall prejudice againſt any newly invented and contrary interpretation; as I ſhall hereafter more fully ſhew, when I come to conſider the ſtrange and extravagant interpretation which the Socinians make of this paſſage of St. John; which is plain enough of itſelf, if they, under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear, had not diſturbed and darkened it.

Now, from this deſcription which the Evangeliſt here gives of the Word, and which I have ſo largely explained in the foregoing diſcourſe, theſe three corollaries or concluſions do neceſſarily follow.

1. That the Word here deſcribed by St. John is not a creature. This concluſion is directly againſt the Arians, who affirmed that the Son of God was a creature. They grant indeed that he is the firſt of all the creatures, both in dignity and duration; for ſo they underſtand that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, wherein he is called *the firſt-born*

of every creature. But this I have endeavoured already to ſhew not to be the meaning of that expreſſion.

They grant him indeed to have been God's agent or inſtrument in the creation of the world, and that all other creatures beſides himſelf were made by him; but ſtill they contend, that he is a creature, and was made. Now, this cannot poſſibly conſiſt with what St. John ſays of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already ſhewn, before any thing was made; and likewiſe, becauſe he is ſaid to have *made all things, and* that *without him was not any thing made that was made:* and therefore he himſelf, who made all things, is neceſſarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a creature; as the Apoſtle reaſons in another caſe: *He hath put all things under his feet: but when he ſaith, all things are put under him, it is manifeſt, that he is excepted who did put all things under him.* In like manner, if *by him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, then either he was not made, or he muſt make himſelf; which involves in it a plain contradiction.

2. That this Word was from all eternity: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he muſt of neceſſity always have been; becauſe whatever is, muſt either have been ſometime made, or muſt always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, muſt be made. And this will likewiſe follow from his being ſaid to be God, and that in the moſt ſtrict and proper ſenſe, which doth neceſſarily imply his eternity; becauſe God cannot begin to be, but muſt of neceſſity always have been.

3. From both theſe, it will undeniably follow, that he had an exiſtence before his incarnation, and his being born of the bleſſed virgin: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, from all eternity, which I have ſhewn to be the meaning of that expreſſion, then certainly he was before his being born of the bleſſed virgin. And this likewiſe is implied in the propoſition in the text, *And the Word was made fleſh, viz.* that Word which the Evangeliſt had before ſo gloriouſly deſcribed; that Word which *was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God*, and *by whom all things were made:* I ſay, that Word was

was incarnate, and aſſumed a human nature; and therefore muſt neceſſarily exiſt and have a being before he could aſſume humanity into an union with his divinity.

And this propoſition is directly levelled againſt the Socinians, who affirm our bleſſed Saviour to be a mere man, and that he had no exiſtence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother. Which aſſertion of theirs doth perfectly contradict all the former concluſions which have been drawn from the deſcription here given by St. John of the Word: and their interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, applying it to the beginning of the publication of the goſpel, and to the new creation or reformation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, doth likewiſe contradict the interpretation of this paſſage conſtantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but even by the general conſent of all Chriſtians for fifteen hundred years together; as I ſhall hereafter plainly ſhew: for, to eſtabliſh this their opinion, that our bleſſed Saviour was a mere man, and had no exiſtence before his birth, they are forced to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. John's goſpel quite to another ſenſe, never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any Chriſtian writer whatſoever before Socinus. And it is not eaſy to imagine how any opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I ſhould now take into conſideration, and ſhew, beſides the novelty of this interpretation, and the great violence and unreaſonableneſs of it, the utter inconſiſtency of it with other plain texts of the New Teſtament.

But this is wholly matter of controverſy, and will require a large diſcourſe by itſelf: I ſhall therefore wave the further proſecution of it at preſent, and apply myſelf to that which is more practical, and proper for the occaſion of this ſeaſon. So that at preſent I have done with the firſt thing contained in the firſt part of the text, *viz.* the perſon here ſpoken of, who is ſaid to be incarnate, namely, the Word; it was he that *was made fleſh*.

I ſhould then have proceeded to the ſecond thing which I propoſed to conſider, *viz.* the myſtery

itſelf, or the nature of this incarnation, ſo far as the ſcripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by aſſuming our nature in ſuch a manner as that the divinity became united to a human ſoul and body. But this I have already endeavoured in ſome meaſure to explain, and ſhall do it more fully in ſome of the following diſcourſes upon this text. I ſhall now only make a ſhort and uſeful reflexion upon it with relation to the ſolemnity of this time.

And it ſhall be to ſtir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to mankind, in the myſtery of our redemption by the incarnation of the Word, the only begotten Son of God; that he ſhould deign to have ſuch a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our caſe ſo much to heart, as to think of redeeming and ſaving mankind from that depth of miſery into which we had plunged ourſelves, and to do this in ſo wonderful and aſtoniſhing a manner; that God ſhould employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all eternity, partaker of his happineſs and glory, and was God of God, to ſave the ſons of men by ſo infinite and amazing a condeſcenſion; that God ſhould vouchſafe to become man, to reconcile man to God; that he ſhould come down from heaven to earth, to raiſe us from earth to heaven; that he ſhould aſſume our vile, and frail, and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with glory, and honour, and immortality; that he ſhould ſuffer death to ſave us from hell, and ſhed his blood to purchaſe eternal redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the perſon is that was employed in this merciful deſign, ſo much the greater is the condeſcenſion, and the love and goodneſs expreſſed in it ſo much the more admirable; that the Son of God ſhould ſtoop from the height of glory and happineſs, to the loweſt degree of abaſement, and to the very depth of miſery, for our ſakes, who were ſo mean and inconſiderable, ſo guilty and obnoxious to the ſeverity of his juſtice, ſo altogether unworthy of his grace and favour, and ſo very unwilling to receive it when it was ſo freely offered to us: for, as the Evangeliſt here tells us, *He came to his own, and his own received him not;* to his own creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their

their maker; to his own nation and kindred, and they deſpiſed him, and eſteemed him not. Lord! what is man, that God ſhould be ſo mindful of him? or the ſon of man, that the Son of God ſhould come down from heaven to viſit him, in ſo much humility and condeſcenſion, and with ſo much kindneſs and compaſſion?

Bleſſed God and Saviour of mankind, what ſhall we render to thee for ſuch mighty love, for ſuch ineſtimable benefits as thou haſt purchaſed for us, and art ready to confer upon us? What ſhall we ſay to thee, O thou preſerver and lover of ſouls, ſo often as we approach thy holy table, there to commemorate this mighty love of thine to us, and to partake of thoſe invaluable bleſſings which, by thy precious blood-ſhedding, thou haſt obtained for us? So often as we there remember, that thou waſt pleaſed to aſſume our mortal nature, on purpoſe to live amongſt us for our inſtruction, and for our example, and to lay down thy life for the redemption of our ſouls, and for the expiation of our ſins; and to *take part of fleſh and blood*, that thou mighteſt ſhed it for our ſakes; what affections ſhould theſe thoughts raiſe in us? what vows and reſolutions ſhould they engage us in, of perpetual love, and gratitude, and obedience to thee the moſt gracious and moſt glorious Redeemer of mankind?

And with what religious ſolemnity ſhould we, more eſpecially at this time, celebrate the incarnation and birth of the Son of God, by giving praiſe and *glory to God in the higheſt*, and by all poſſible demonſtration of charity and *good-will to men?* And as he was pleaſed to aſſume our nature, ſo ſhould we, eſpecially at this ſeaſon, *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; that is, ſincerely embrace and practiſe his religion, *making no proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.* And now that the *ſun of righteouſneſs* is riſen upon the world, we ſhould *walk as children of the light, and demean ourſelves decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envy*; and ſhould be very careful not to abuſe ourſelves by ſin and ſenſuality, upon this very conſideration, that the Son hath put ſuch an honour and dignity upon us. We ſhould reverence that nature which God did not diſdain to aſſume, and

to inhabit here on earth, and in which he now gloriously reigns in heaven, at the right hand of his Father. To him be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIV.

Concerning the divinity of our bleſſed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, January 6. 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Proceed now to proſecute the third corollary or concluſion which does neceſſarily follow from the deſcription which St. John in the beginning of his goſpel gives of the Word, and which I have ſo largely explained in the foregoing diſcourſe. And it was this:

That the Word here deſcribed by the Evangeliſt, had an exiſtence before his incarnation, and his being born of the bleſſed virgin.

This aſſertion, I told you, is levelled directly againſt the Socinians, who affirm our bleſſed Saviour to be a mere man, and deny that he had any exiſtence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother. Which poſition of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former concluſions which have been ſo evidently drawn from the deſcription here given of the Word: and not only ſo, but hath forced them to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. John's goſpel in a very different ſenſe from that which was conſtantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but by the general conſent of all Chriſtians 1500 years together. For to eſtabliſh this their opinion of our Saviour's being a mere man, and having no exiſtence before his birth, they have found it neceſſary

neceſſary to expound this whole paſſage quite to another ſenſe, and ſuch as, by their own confeſſion, was never mentioned, nor I believe thought of by any Chriſtian writer whatſoever before Socinus.

For this reaſon, I ſhall very particularly conſider the interpretation which Socinus gives of this paſſage of St. John; and, beſides the novelty of it, which they themſelves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifeſt the great violence and unreaſonableneſs, and likewiſe the inconſiſtency of it with other plain texts of the New Teſtament.

It is very evident what it was that forced Socinus to ſo ſtrained and violent an interpretation of this paſſage of the Evangeliſt; namely, that he plainly ſaw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally received interpretation of this paſſage, in all ages of the Chriſtian church down to his time, ſtood in the way of his opinion, of Chriſt's being a mere man; which he was ſo fond of, and muſt of neceſſity have quitted, unleſs he would either have denied the divine authority of St. John's goſpel, or elſe could ſupplant the common interpretation of this paſſage, by putting a quite different ſenſe upon it. Which ſenſe he could find no way to ſupport, without ſuch pitiful and wretched ſhifts, ſuch precarious and arbitrary ſuppoſitions, as a man of ſo ſharp a reaſon and judgment as Socinus could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But neceſſity hath no laws, either of reaſon or modeſty; and he who is reſolved to maintain an opinion which he hath once taken up, muſt ſtick at nothing, but muſt break through all difficulties that ſtand in his way. And ſo the Socinians have here done; as will, I hope, manifeſtly appear in the following diſcourſe.

They grant, that by *the Word* is here meant Chriſt, by whom God ſpake and declared his mind and will to the world; which they make to be the whole reaſon of that name or title of *the Word* which is here given him, and not becauſe by him God made the world: for the word by which God made the world, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful command of God, and not a perſon who was deſigned to be the Meſſias. And becauſe, as I have ſhewed before, the ancient Jews do make

make frequent mention of this title of *the Word of God*, by whom, they ſay, God made the world, and do likewiſe apply this title to the Meſſias; therefore, to avoid this, Schlictingius ſays, that the Chaldee paraphraſts, Jonathan and Onkelos, do ſometimes put *the Word of God* for *God*, by a metonymy of the effect for the cauſe; but then he confidently denies, that they do any where diſtinguiſh the *Word* of God from the *perſon* of God, as they acknowledge that St. John here does; nor do they, ſays he, underſtand, by *the Word of God*, the *Meſſias*, but, on the contrary, do oppoſe *the Word of God* to the *Meſſias*. All which is moſt evidently confuted by that paſſage which I cited before out of the Targum of Jonathan, who renders thoſe words concerning the Meſſias, *The Lord ſaid unto my Lord*, &c. thus, *The Lord ſaid unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand*, &c.; where you ſee both that *the Word of God* is plainly diſtinguiſhed from God, and that it is the title given to the Meſſias; which are the two things which Schlictingius doth ſo confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by *the Word*, St. John means the *Meſſias*, I ſhall, in the next place, ſhew, by what ſtrained and forced arts of interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and neceſſary conſequence from this paſſage of St. John; namely, that the Word had an exiſtence before he was *made fleſh*, and born of the bleſſed virgin his mother.

This then, in ſhort, is the interpretation which they give of this paſſage; than which, I think, nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

In the beginning: This they will by no means have to refer to the creation of the world, but to the beginning of the goſpel; that is, when the goſpel firſt began to be publiſhed, then was Chriſt, and not before. *And he was with God;* that is, ſays Socinus, Chriſt, as he was the word of God, that is, the goſpel of Chriſt, which was afterwards by him revealed to the world, was firſt only known to God. But all this being ſomewhat hard, firſt to underſtand by *the beginning*, not the beginning of the world, but of the goſpel; and then by *the Word which was with God*, to underſtand the goſpel, which, before it was revealed, was only known to God; they have

have upon ſecond thoughts found out another meaning of thoſe words, *And the Word was with God;* that is, ſaith Schlichtingius, Chriſt was taken up by God into heaven, and there inſtructed in the mind and will of God, and from thence ſent down into the world again, to declare it to mankind.

And the Word was God; that is, ſay they, Chriſt had the honour and title of *God* conferred upon him, as magiſtrates alſo have, who in the ſcripture are called *gods:* He *was God,* not by nature, but by office, and by divine conſtitution and appointment.

All things were made by him: This they will needs have to be meant of the renovation and reformation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, which is ſeveral times in ſcripture called a *new creation.*

This, in ſhort, is the ſum of their interpretation of this paſſage; which I ſhall now examine; and to which I ſhall oppoſe three things, as ſo many invincible prejudices againſt it.

1. That not only all the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church, but, ſo far as I can find, all interpreters whatſoever for fifteen hundred years together, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John in a quite different ſenſe; namely, of the creation of the material, and not of the renovation of the moral world. And I add further, that the generality of Chriſtians did ſo underſtand this paſſage, as to collect from it, as an undoubted point of Chriſtianity, that the Word had a real exiſtence before he was born of the bleſſed virgin.

And thus not only the orthodox Chriſtians, but even the Arians, and Amelius the Platoniſt, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John; without any thought of this invention, that he ſpake not of the old, but of the new creation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, and the reformation of mankind by the preaching of the goſpel: which, I dare ſay, no indifferent reader of St. John, that had not been prepoſſeſſed and biaſſed by ſome violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And ſurely it ought to be very conſiderable in this caſe, that the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers, Ignatius, Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, Tertullian, and even

even Origen himſelf, who is called the father of interpreters, are moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter. For Ignatius was the ſcholar of Polycarp, who was a diſciple of St. John; and Juſtin Martyr lived in the next age to that of the Apoſtles; and Origen was a man of infinite learning and reading, and in his comments upon ſcripture ſeems to have conſidered all the interpretations of thoſe that were before him; ſo that, if this, which Socinus is ſo confident is the true ſenſe of St. John, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay, rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reaſon, yet for the ſurpriſing novelty and ſtrangeneſs of it, with which he was apt to be over-much delighted.

So that, if this interpretation of Socinus be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almoſt incredible: Firſt, that thoſe who lived ſo very near St. John's time, and were moſt likely to know his meaning, as Ignatius, Juſtin Martyr, *&c.* ſhould ſo widely miſtake it: And then, that the whole Chriſtian world ſhould for ſo many ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of ſo important an article of faith, if it were true; or, if it were not, ſhould be led into ſo groſs and dangerous an error as this muſt needs be, if Chriſt had no real exiſtence before he was born into the world: and which would be neceſſarily conſequent upon this, that no man did underſtand this paſſage of St. John aright before Socinus. This very conſideration alone, if there were no other, were ſufficient to ſtagger any prudent man's belief of this interpretation.

And as to the novelty of it, Socinus himſelf makes no difficulty to own it; nay he ſeems rather to rejoice and to applaud himſelf in it. Unhappy man! that was ſo wedded to his own opinion, that no objection, no difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer myſelf to his preface to his explication of this firſt chapter of St. John's goſpel; where you ſhall find theſe words cencerning the paſſage now in controverſy, *Quorum verus ſenſus omnes prorſus qui quidem extarent explanatores latuiſſe videtur:* "The "true ſenſe of which words (ſays he) ſeems to have "been hid from all the expoſitors that ever were ex-

"tant."

" tant." And upon theſe words, ℣ 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him*, he hath this expreſſion, *Quid autem hoc loco ſibi velit Johannes, à nemine quod ſciam adhuc rectè expoſitum fuit:* " But what " St. John means in this place, was never yet, that I " know of, by any man rightly explained." And Schlictingius after him, with more confidence, but much leſs decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of thoſe expreſſions, *in the beginning*, and of thoſe which follow concerning the Word, the ancient interpreters did *ab Apoſtoli mente delirare;* went " ſo far from the Apo- " ſtle's meaning, as if they had raved and been out of " their wits." Which is ſo extravagantly ſaid, and with ſo much contempt of thoſe great and venerable names, who were the chief propagators of Chriſtianity in the world, and to whom all ages do ſo juſtly pay a reverence, that nothing can be ſaid in excuſe of him, but only that it is not uſual with him to fall into ſuch raſh and rude expreſſions. But the man was really pinched by ſo plain and preſſing a text; and where reaſon is weak and blunt, paſſion muſt be whetted, the only weapon that is left when reaſon fails: and I always take it for granted, that no man is ever angry with his adverſary, but for want of a better argument to ſupport his cauſe.

And yet, to do right to the writers on that ſide, I muſt own, that generally they are a pattern of the fair way of diſputing, and of debating matters of religion, without heat, and unſeemly reflexions upon their adverſaries; in the number of whom I did not expect that the primitive fathers of the Chriſtian church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from paſſion and tranſport, which becomes a ſerious and weighty argument: and for the moſt part they reaſon cloſely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution; with great dexterity and decency, and yet with ſmartneſs and ſubtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: virtues to be praiſed where-ever they are found, yea even in an enemy, and very worthy our imitation. In a word, they are the ſtrongeſt managers of a weak cauſe, and which is ill founded at the bottom,

tom, that perhaps ever yet meddled with controverſy; inſomuch that ſome of the Proteſtants, and the generality of the Popiſh writers, and even of the Jeſuits themſelves, who pretend to all the reaſon and ſubtilty in the world, are in compariſon of them but mere ſcolds and bunglers. Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good cauſe and truth on their ſide; which if they had, they have reaſon, and wit, and temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the buſineſs: That which I urge them withal, and that from their own confeſſion, is this, That this interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole Chriſtian world before Socinus; and for that reaſon, in my opinion, not to be bragged of; becauſe it is in effect to ſay, that the Chriſtian religion, in a point pretended on both ſides to be of the greateſt moment, was never rightly underſtood by any ſince the Apoſtles days, for fifteen hundred years together; and, which makes the matter yet worſe, that the religion which was particularly deſigned to overthrow Polytheiſm, and the belief of more gods, hath, according to them, been ſo ill taught and underſtood by Chriſtians, for ſo many ages together, and almoſt from the very beginning of Chriſtianity, as does neceſſarily infer a plurality of gods: an inconvenience ſo great, as no cauſe, how plauſible ſoever it may otherwiſe appear, is able to ſtand under, and to ſuſtain the weight of it.

For this the Socinians object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable conſequence of our interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, and of all other texts of ſcripture produced by us to the ſame purpoſe, notwithſtanding that this interpretation hath obtained in the Chriſtian church for ſo many ages. Now, whoſoever can believe, that the Chriſtian religion hath done the work for which it was principally deſigned ſo ineffectually, muſt have very little reverence for it; nay, it muſt be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it at all. All that can be ſaid in this caſe is, that it pleaſes God many times to permit men to hold very inconſiſtent things, and which do in truth, though they themſelves diſcern it not, moſt effectually overthrow one another.

2. Another mighty prejudice againſt this interpretation

tion is this, that, according to this rate of liberty in interpreting ſcripture, it will ſignify very little or nothing when any perſon or party is concerned to oppoſe any doctrine contained in it; and the plaineſt texts for any article of faith, how fundamental and neceſſary ſoever, may, by the ſame arts and ways of interpretation, be eluded, and rendered utterly ineffectual for the eſtabliſhing of it. For example: If any man had a mind to call in queſtion that article of the creed concerning the creation of the world, why might he not, according to Socinus's way of interpreting St. John, underſtand the firſt chapter of Geneſis concerning the beginning of the Moſaical diſpenſation, and interpret the creation of the heaven and the earth to be the inſtitution of the Jewiſh polity and religion, as by the *new heavens* and the *new earth* they pretend is to be underſtood the new ſtate of things under the goſpel? and why may not the chaos ſignify that ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance in which the world was before the giving of the law by Moſes? and ſo on; as a very learned divine of our own [Dr. Stillingfleet] hath ingeniouſly ſhewn more at large.

There is no end of wit and fancy, which can turn any thing any way; and can make whatever they pleaſe to be the meaning of any book, though never ſo contrary to the plain deſign of it, and to that ſenſe which, at the firſt hearing and reading of it, is obvious to every man of common ſenſe.

And this, in my opinion, Socinus hath done in the caſe now before us, by impoſing a new, and odd, and violent ſenſe upon this paſſage of St. John, directly contrary to what any man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewiſe to the ſenſe of the Chriſtian church in all ages down to his time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of underſtanding St. John aright, and as much integrity, as any man can now modeſtly pretend to: and all this only to ſerve and ſupport an opinion which he had entertained before, and therefore was reſolved, one way or other, to bring the ſcripture to comply with it: and if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at laſt have called in queſtion the divine authority of St. John's goſpel, rather than have quitted his opinion.

And, to ſpeak freely, I muſt needs ſay, that it ſeems to me a much fairer way, to reject the divine authority of a book, than to uſe it ſo diſingenuouſly, and to wreſt the plain expreſſions of it with ſo much ſtraining and violence from their moſt natural and obvious ſenſe: for no doctrine whatſoever can have any certain foundation in any book, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain ſcope and occaſion of it, to play upon the words and phraſes, with all the arts of criticiſm, and with all the variety of allegory, which a briſk and lively imagination can deviſe; which I am ſo far from admiring in the expounding of the holy ſcriptures, that I am always jealous of an over-laboured and far-fetched interpretation of any author whatſoever.

I do readily grant, that the Socinian writers have managed the cauſe of the reformation, againſt the innovations and corruptions of the church of Rome, both in doctrine and practice, with great acuteneſs and advantage in many reſpects. But I am ſorry to have cauſe to ſay, that they have likewiſe put into their hands better and ſharper weapons than ever they had before, for the weakening and undermining of the authority of the holy ſcriptures; which Socinus indeed hath in the general ſtrongly aſſerted, had he not, by a dangerous liberty of impoſing a foreign and forced ſenſe upon particular texts, brought the whole into uncertainty.

3. Which is as conſiderable a prejudice againſt this new interpretation of this paſſage of St. John as either of the former, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this point, of the exiſtence of the Word before his incarnation, does not rely only upon this ſingle paſſage of St. John, but is likewiſe confirmed by many other texts of the New Teſtament, conſpiring in the ſame ſenſe, and utterly incapable of the interpretation which Socinus gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted, that this is the only text in the New Teſtament to this purpoſe; and therefore he ſays very cunningly, that this doctrine of the exiſtence of the Son of God before his incarnation, is too great a doctrine to be eſtabliſhed upon one ſingle text. And this is ſomething, if it were true, that there is no other text in the New Teſtament that does plainly deliver the ſame ſenſe; and yet this were not

not ſufficient to bring in queſtion the doctrine delivered in this paſſage of St. John.

That *God is a ſpirit* will, I hope, be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental point of religion; and yet I am very much miſtaken if there be any more than one text in the whole Bible that ſays ſo; and that text is only in St. John's goſpel. I know it may be ſaid, that, from the light of natural reaſon, it may be ſufficiently proved that God is a ſpirit. But ſurely Socinus of all men cannot ſay this with a good grace; becauſe he denies that the exiſtence of a God can be known by natural light without divine revelation: and if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God, much leſs can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a ſpirit or a body.

And yet, after all, it is very far from being true, that there is but one text to this purpoſe; which yet he thought fit to inſinuate by way of excuſe for the novelty and boldneſs of his interpretation; of which any one that reads him may ſee that he was ſufficiently conſcious to himſelf, and therefore was ſo wiſe as to endeavour by this ſly inſinuation to provide and lay in againſt it. I have likewiſe another reaſon, which very much inclines me to believe that Socinus was the firſt author of this interpretation; becauſe it ſeems to me next to impoſſible, that a man of ſo good an underſtanding as he was, could have ever been ſo fond of ſo ill-favoured a child, if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his followers came into it ſo readily, ſince they had him in ſo great a veneration; it being natural to all ſects to admire their maſter: beſides that I doubt not but they were very glad to have ſo great an authority, as they thought him to be, to vouch for an interpretation, which was ſo ſeaſonably deviſed for the relief of their cauſe, in ſo much danger to be overthrown by a text that was ſo plain and full againſt them.

And how little ground there is for this inſinuation, that this is the only text in the New Teſtament to this purpoſe, I ſhall now ſhew from a multitude of other texts to the ſame ſenſe and purpoſe with this paſſage of St. John. And I ſhall rank them under two heads.

1. Thoſe which expreſsly aſſert the Son of God to

have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

2. Thoſe which affirm that the world and all creatures whatſoever were made by him.

1. Thoſe texts which expreſsly affert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

No man hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven, John iii. 13.; where the Son is ſaid to have *come down from heaven*, in reſpect of the union of his divinity with human nature, and his ſpecial reſidence in it here below; and yet he is ſaid ſo to have *come down from heaven*, as ſtill *to be in heaven: He that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven*; that is, in reſpect of his divinity, by which he is every where preſent. And *he that came down from heaven* is here called *the Son of man*, by the ſame figure that his blood is elſewhere called *the blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. the Apoſtle aſcribing that to one nature which is proper to the other. This we take to be the moſt natural and eaſy ſenſe of this text, and moſt agreeable to the tenor of the New Teſtament.

Again, *What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of man aſcend up where he was before?* John vi. 62. So that, if he really *aſcended up to heaven* after his reſurrection, he was really there before his incarnation.

Before Abraham was, (ſays our bleſſed Saviour), *I am*, John viii. 58.; the obvious ſenſe of which words is, that he had a real exiſtence before Abraham was actually in being.

Again, it is ſaid, John xiii. 3. that *Jeſus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God*, &c.

And again, John xvi. 27. 28. *For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This was ſo very plain, that his diſciples, who were ſlow enough of apprehenſion in other things, did underſtand this ſo well, that, upon this declaration

claration of his, they were convinced of his omniſcience, which is an incommunicable property of the divinity: for ſo it immediately follows, ỳ 29. 30. *His diſciples ſaid unto him, Lo, now ſpeakeſt thou plainly, and ſpeakeſt no parable. Now are we ſure that thou knoweſt all things, and needeſt not that any man ſhould aſk thee: by this we believe that thou cameſt forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declared muſt be the meaning of our Saviour's words, or elſe his diſciples were groſsly miſtaken, and did not underſtand him at all: and if ſo, then ſurely our Saviour, before he had proceeded any further, would have corrected their miſtake, and have ſet them right in this matter. But ſo far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have underſtood him aright: for thus it follows, ỳ 31. *Jeſus anſwered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had ſaid, I am glad that you are at laſt convinced, and do believe that *I came from God*, and muſt return to him; and that *I know all things*, which none but God can do. Is it now poſſible for any man to read this paſſage, and yet not to be convinced that the diſciples underſtood our Saviour to ſpeak literally? But if his meaning was as the Socinians would make us believe, then the diſciples did perfectly miſtake his words; the contrary whereof is, I think, very plain and evident beyond all contradiction.

Again, John xvii. 5. *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* This ſurely is not ſpoken of his being with God after his incarnation, and before his entrance upon his publick miniſtry: they have not, I think, the face to underſtand this expreſſion, *before the world was*, of the new creation; but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I ſhall conſider by and by.

And a little after, ỳ 8. *I have given unto them the words which thou gaveſt me; and they have received them, and known ſurely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didſt ſend me.*

Again, 1 John i. 1. 2. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that*

eternal life (for ſo he calls the Son of God) *which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.*

And that he was not only with God before he aſſumed human nature, but alſo was really God, St. Paul tells us, Phil. ii. 5. 6. 7. 8. *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who being in the form of God,* οὐχ' ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, *did not arrogate to himſelf to be equal with God*; that is, he made no oſtentation of his divinity: for this I take to be the true meaning of that phraſe, both becauſe it is ſo uſed by Plutarch, and becauſe it makes the ſenſe much more eaſy and current, thus: *Who being in the form of God, did not aſſume an equality with God*; that is, he did not appear in the glory of his divinity, which was hid under a veil of human fleſh and infirmity: *but he emptied himſelf, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men; and being found in faſhion as a man,* (or in the habit of a man), *he became obedient unto death,* &c. So that if his *being made in the likeneſs and faſhion of a man* does ſignify, that he was really man by his incarnation, then ſurely his *being in the form of God,* when *he took upon him the faſhion and likeneſs of man,* and *the form of a ſervant* or ſlave, muſt in all reaſon ſignify, that he was really God before he became man. For which reaſon the ſame Apoſtle did not doubt to ſay, that *God was manifeſted in the fleſh,* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

And now I hope that I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. John's goſpel is not the ſingle and only text upon which we ground this great doctrine, as Socinus calls it, and as we really eſteem it to be; for you ſee that I have produced a great many more: to avoid the dint and force whereof the Socinians do chiefly make uſe of theſe two anſwers.

1ſt, To thoſe texts which ſay, that *he was in heaven,* and *came down from heaven,* they give this anſwer, That our Saviour ſome time before his entrance upon his public miniſtry, they cannot agree preciſely when, was taken up into heaven, and then and there had the will of God revealed to him, and was ſent down from heaven again to make it known to the world.

This is ſo very arbitrary and precarious a ſuppoſition, that I muſt confeſs myſelf not a little out of countenance for

for them, that men of ſo much wit and reaſon ſhould ever be put to ſo ſorry and pitiful a ſhift. For can any man imagine, that in ſo exact a hiſtory of our Saviour's life, written by ſeveral perſons, the relation of ſo important a matter as this, and of the circumſtances of it, ſhould be wholly omitted? That we ſhould have a particular account of his being carried into Egypt in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence; of his diſputing in the temple with the Jewiſh doctors, and putting them to ſilence, when he was but twelve years of age: a punctual relation of his being baptized by John; and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the wilderneſs to be tempted of the devil*, and was carried by that evil ſpirit from one place to another: but not one word of his being taken up by God into heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the leaſt intimation given either of the time, or any other circumſtance of ſo memorable a thing, upon which, according to the Socinians, the authority of his miſſion, and the divinity of his doctrine, did ſo much depend: when ſo many things, of ſo much leſs moment, are ſo minutely and exactly reported; what can be the reaſon of this deep ſilence in all the Evangeliſts concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondered, that St. John, who wrote his goſpel laſt, and, as Euſebius tells us, on purpoſe to ſupply the omiſſions of the other Evangeliſts, ſhould give no account of this thing; and yet, as the Socinians ſuppoſe, ſhould ſo often take it for granted, and refer to it; as when it is ſaid, that *he came forth from God*, and was *ſent from God*, and *came down from heaven*, beſides ſeveral other expreſſions to this purpoſe.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a thing, and this without any ground from the hiſtory of the goſpel, only to ſerve an hypotheſis which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unleſs they may have leave to make a ſuppoſition, for which they have nothing in truth to ſay, but only that it is neceſſary to defend an opinion which they are reſolved not to part with upon any terms?

This is ſo inartificial, not to ſay abſurd, a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is neceſſary to that purpoſe, that no man of common ingenuity

nuity would make uſe of it: and there is no ſurer ſign that a cauſe is greatly diſtreſſed, than to be driven to ſuch a ſhift. For do but give a man leave to ſuppoſe what he pleaſes, and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Beſides that, according to this device, the Son of God did not firſt come from heaven into the world, as the ſcripture ſeems every where to ſay; but firſt was in the world, and then went to heaven, and from thence came back into the world again: and he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was firſt in the world, and afterwards with God; whereas St. John ſays, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made fleſh, and dwelt among us*: but they ſay, that he firſt *was made fleſh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God*: A ſuppoſition which is quite contrary to all the texts which I have mentioned.

Nor do the ſeveral parts of this interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, ſay they, when the goſpel firſt began to be publiſhed, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning, he was with God*; that is, in heaven to receive from God that doctrine which he was to deliver to the world. But if by *the beginning* be meant the firſt publication of the goſpel, he was not then with God, but had been with him, and was come back from him, before he entered upon his publick miniſtry; which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning*. And *in the beginning he was God*; that is, ſay they, not God by nature, but by office and divine conſtitution: and yet in this again they fall foul upon themſelves; for they ſay he was not declared to be God till after his reſurrection, and his being advanced to the right hand of God: ſo that he was not God in their ſenſe of *the beginning*; that is, when he entered upon his publick miniſtry, and began to preach the goſpel.

2*dly*, As to ſome other texts, which ſpeak of his exiſtence before his incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the world was*; and, *before Abraham was, I am*; theſe they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the world was*, and that he was *before Abraham was*, *viz.* in the divine foreknowledge and decree. But then ſurely they do not conſider, that

that this is nothing but what might have been ſaid of any other man, and even of Abraham himſelf, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual exiſtence, he was in the purpoſe and decree of God; that is, before he was, God did intend he ſhould be: which is a ſenſe ſo very flat, that I can hardly abſtain from ſaying it is ridiculous. For certainly our Saviour did intend, by ſaying this of himſelf, to give himſelf ſome preference and advantage above Abraham: which this ſenſe and interpretation does not in the leaſt do; becauſe of any other man, as well as of our bleſſed Saviour, it may as truly be ſaid, that he was in the foreknowledge and decree of God before Abraham was born.

And I cannot but obſerve further, that our Saviour does not ſay, *Before Abraham was, I was*; but, *Before Abraham was, I AM.* Which is the proper name of God, whereby is ſignified the eternal duration and permanency of his being. In which ſenſe he is ſaid by the Apoſtle to the Hebrews to be *the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. And ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf in St. John's viſion, Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* And that this is ſpoken of the Son, you may ſee in the ſame chapter, where he ſays of himſelf, ℣ 17. *I am the firſt and the laſt.* And ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf again, Rev. xxii. 13. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the firſt and the laſt.* And that we may not doubt who it is that thus deſcribes his own eternity, he, continuing ſtill to ſpeak in the ſame perſon, ſays, ℣. 16. *I Jeſus have ſent mine angel*, &c. After this I ſhall only obſerve, that all theſe expreſſions are the common deſcription which the ſcripture gives of the eternity of God, whoſe being is commenſurate to all the ſeveral reſpects of duration, paſt, preſent, and to come: beſides that the attribute of *almighty* is alſo a part of this deſcription, which is ſo peculiar a property of God, I mean of him who is God by nature, that the ſcripture never gives it to any other.

2. I ſhall, in the next place, produce thoſe texts which do expreſsly affirm that the world and all creatures whatſoever were made by him: and this will not only infer his

his existence before his incarnation, but from all eternity.

And for this, besides this passage of St. John, we have the Apostle to the Hebrews most express, who says, that *by him God made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. And St. Paul likewise says the same more fully and particularly, Colos. i. 15. 16. calling Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, *the first-born of every creature*; that is, as I have shewn in my former discourse, the heir and lord of the whole creation: *For by him* (says he) *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers*; for so he calls the several orders of angels: *all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things*: or, as he is described in St. John's vision, *he is the beginning of the creation of God*; that is, the principle and efficient cause of the creation; or else, he was when all things began to be made; and therefore must be before any thing was created; and for that reason could not be a creature himself; and, consequently, must of necessity have been from all eternity.

Now, these texts must necessarily be understood of the old creation, and of the natural world; and not of the moral world, and the renovation and reformation of the minds and manners of men by the gospel: for that was only the world here below which was reformed by him, and not things in heaven; not the invisible world, not the several orders of good angels, *which kept their first station*, and have no need to be reformed and made anew: nor the devil and his evil angels; for though since the preaching of the gospel they have been under greater restraint, and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reformed, but are devils still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to mankind that God will suffer them to do.

So that these texts seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves; but they appear to be much more convincing, when we consider the groundless interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any man that seriously attends to the perpetual style and phrase of the New Testament,

ment, and to the plain ſcope and drift of the Apoſtle's reaſoning in theſe texts, be induced to believe, that when St. Paul tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:* I ſay, can any man of good ſenſe perſuade himſelf, that by all this the Apoſtle means no more, than the moral renovation of the world here below, and the reformation of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, and his goſpel which was preached unto them?

But there is yet one text more to this purpoſe, which I have reſerved to the laſt place, becauſe I find Schlictingius and Crellius, in their joint comment upon it, to be put to their laſt ſhifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, at the beginning of it; where the Apoſtle thus deſcribes the Son of God: *God* (ſays he) *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken to us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. From whence he argues the excellency of the goſpel above the law: for the law was given by angels, but the goſpel by the Son of God; whoſe pre-eminence above the angels he ſhews at large in the two firſt chapters of this epiſtle.

And to this end he proves the two parts of the deſcription which had been given of him, namely, that God had *conſtituted him heir of all things*, ℣ 2.; and that *by him he made the worlds.*

1*ſt*, That God had *conſtituted him heir of all things*; which is no where ſaid of the angels: but of him it is ſaid, that he was *made ſo much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they*, ℣ 7. The angels are only called God's miniſters, for which the Apoſtle cites the words of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. civ. 4.; but to Chriſt he gives the title of *his Son*, and *his firſt-begotten*, by virtue whereof he is *heir of all things: for to which of the angels ſaid he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* ℣ 6. And this I will agree with them to be ſpoken of Chriſt with reſpect to his reſurrection; by which, as St. Paul tells us, he was *powerfully declared to be the Son of God*, Rom. i. 4. This is the firſt prerogative of Chriſt above

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the angels. But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

2*dly*, That he had not only the title of *God* given him, but that he was truly and really *God*, becauſe *he made the world*, ℣ 8. That the title of *God* was given him, he proves by a citation out of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlv. 6. 7. *But unto the Son he ſaith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, &c. And that he was truly and really God, becauſe *he made the world*, he proves by a citation out of another pſalm; where it is ſaid of him, ℣ 10. 11. 12. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They ſhall periſh*, &c.

Let us now ſee how Schlictingius and Crellius interpret this text cited out of the Pſalmiſt by the Apoſtle, as ſpoken of Chriſt. They ſay *, that the author of this epiſtle "could not have referred to Chriſt the former "words *of this citation*, which ſpeak of the creation of "heaven and earth, unleſs he had taken it for granted, "that Chriſt is the moſt high God; eſpecially if they "be underſtood, as they muſt neceſſarily be *by thoſe "who take this for granted*, to be ſpoken in the firſt "place, and directly to *or concerning* Chriſt. For ſince "all the words of the pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of "the moſt high God, but that Chriſt is that God, is "not ſignified, no not ſo much as by one word in "that pſalm; it is neceſſary, that if you will have theſe "words to be directed to Chriſt, you muſt take it for "granted, that Chriſt is that moſt high God of whom "the Pſalmiſt there ſpeaks."

Now, we will join iſſue with theſe interpreters, upon this conceſſion, *viz.* that the author of this epiſtle "could "not have referred theſe words, which ſpeak of the "creation of heaven and earth, to Chriſt, without ta-

* *Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræque creatione loquentia, ad Chriſtum potuiſſet autor, niſi pro conceſſo ſumſiſſet Chriſtum eſſe ſummum illum Deum, cœli & terræ creatorem; præſertim ſi ea, ut neceſſe foret, primò & directè ad Chriſtum dicta eſſe cenſeas. Nam cùm omnia pſalmi verba manifeſtè de Deo loquuntur, Chriſtum autem Deum illum eſſe ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc pſalmo indicetur; neceſſe eſt, ut ſi verba illa ad Chriſtum directa eſſe velis, pro conceſſo ſumas, Chriſtum eſſe Deum illum ſummum de quo in pſalmo ſermo eſt.*

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"king it for granted, that Chriſt is truly that God who "made the world." And if the author of this epiſtle does affirm theſe words of the Pſalmiſt to be ſpoken of Chriſt, then they muſt acknowledge Chriſt to be the true God who made heaven and earth. But the author of this epiſtle does as evidently affirm theſe words to be ſpoken to or of Chriſt, as he does the words of any other text cited in this chapter: and for this I appeal to the common ſenſe of every man that reads them.

Theſe interpreters indeed are contented, that the latter part of this citation ſhould be ſpoken of Chriſt, but not the former. But why not the former as well as the latter, when they have ſo expreſsly told us, that "all "the words of this pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of God?" What is the myſtery of this? Could they not as eaſily have interpreted the former part, which ſpeaks of the creation of heaven and earth, concerning the moral world, and the new creation or reformation of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel, as well as ſo many other plain texts to the ſame purpoſe? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have ſet as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? It was for a reaſon which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be gueſſed at, namely, that, if they had admitted the former words to have been ſpoken of Chriſt, they knew not what to do with the latter part of this citation, ℣ 11. 12. *They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; and they all ſhall wax old as doth a garment; and as a veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed.* What ſhall *periſh*, and *wax old*, and *be changed?* Why, the earth and the heavens, which the Son had made; that is, the moral world, the reformation of mankind, and the new creation of things by the goſpel. All theſe muſt have undergone the ſame fate with the natural world, and muſt not only have been defaced, but utterly deſtroyed, and brought to nothing. This they would not ſay; but they did ſee it, though they would not ſeem to ſee it. And we may plainly ſee by this, that they can interpret a text right when neceſſity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their cauſe avoid it. But when men have once reſolved to hold faſt an opinion they have

taken up, it then becomes not only convenient, but neceſſary, to underſtand nothing that makes againſt it. And this is truly the preſent caſe. But, in the mean time, where is ingenuity, and love of truth?

And thus I have, with all the clearneſs and brevity I could, ſearched to the very foundations of this new interpretation of this paſſage of the Evangeliſt, upon which the divinity of the Son of God is ſo firmly eſtabliſhed; and likewiſe of the groſs miſinterpretations of ſeveral other texts to the ſame purpoſe in this Evangeliſt, and in other books of the New Teſtament. All which interpretations I have endeavoured to ſhew to be not only contrary to the ſenſe of all antiquity; of which as Socinus had but little knowledge, ſo he ſeems to have made but little account; but to be alſo evidently contrary to the perpetual tenor and ſtyle of the holy ſcripture.

Before I go off from this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our adverſaries in this cauſe do perpetually glory, as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this point of the divinity of the Son of God, and conſequently in that other point of the bleſſed Trinity, namely, that they have reaſon clearly on their ſide in this controverſy; and that the difficulties and abſurdities are much greater and plainer on our part than on theirs.

Here they are pleaſed to triumph without modeſty, and without meaſure: and yet, notwithſtanding this, I am not afraid here likewiſe to join iſſue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair trial at the bar of reaſon, as well as of ſcripture, expounded by the general tradition of the Chriſtian church: I ſay, by general tradition; which, next to ſcripture, is the beſt and ſureſt confirmation of this great point now in queſtion between us, and that which gives us the greateſt and trueſt light for the right underſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning of ſcripture, not only in this, but in moſt other important doctrines of the Chriſtian religion.

I am not without ſome good hopes, I will not ſay confidence; (for I never thought that to be ſo great an advantage to any cauſe, as ſome men would be glad to make others believe it is; hoping to help and ſupport a weak argument by a ſtrong and mighty confidence.

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But ſurely modeſty never hurt any cauſe; and the confidence of man ſeems to me to be much like *the wrath of man*, which St. James tells us, chap. i. 20. *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never ſerves any wiſe and real purpoſe of religion):

I ſay, I am not without ſome good hopes, that I have in the foregoing diſcourſes clearly ſhewn, that the tenor of ſcripture and general tradition are on our ſide in this argument; and therefore I ſhall not need to give myſelf the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now, as to the point of reaſon, the great difficulty and abſurdity which they object to our doctrine concerning this myſtery, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above reaſon, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above reaſon, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this, I think, will bear no great diſpute; becauſe, if they would be pleaſed to ſpeak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our reaſon is not able fully to comprehend it. But what then? Are there no myſteries in religion? That I am ſure they will not ſay; becauſe God, whoſe infinite nature and perfections are the very foundation of all religion, is certainly the greateſt myſtery of all other, and the moſt incomprehenſible: but we muſt not, nay they will not for this reaſon deny, that there is ſuch a being as God. And therefore, if there be myſteries in religion, it is no reaſonable objection againſt them, that we cannot fully comprehend them; becauſe all myſteries, in what kind ſoever, whether in religion or in nature, ſo long, and ſo far as they are myſteries, are for that very reaſon incomprehenſible.

But they urge the matter much farther, that this particular myſtery now under debate, is plainly contrary to reaſon. And if they can make this good, I will confeſs that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good againſt us, they muſt clearly ſhew ſome plain contradiction in this doctrine; which I could never yet ſee done by any. Great difficulty, I acknowledge, there is in the explication of it; in which the further we go, beyond what God has thought fit to reveal to us in ſcripture

concerning it, the more we are intangled: and that which men are pleaſed to call an explaining of it, does in my apprehenſion often make it more obſcure; that is, leſs plain than it was before; which does not ſo very well agree with a pretence of explication.

Here then I fix my foot, that there are three differences in the Deity, which the ſcripture ſpeaks of by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, and every where ſpeaks of them, as we uſe to do of three diſtinct perſons: and therefore I ſee no reaſon, why in this argument we ſhould nicely abſtain from uſing the word *perſon*, though I remember that St. Jerome does ſomewhere deſire to be excuſed from it.

Now, concerning theſe three, I might, in the firſt place, urge that plain and expreſs text, 1 John v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe three are one.* But upon this I will not now inſiſt, becauſe it is pretended, that in ſome copies of greateſt antiquity this verſe is omitted; the contrary whereof is, I think, capable of being made out very clearly. But this matter would be too long to be debated at preſent.

However that be, thus much is certain, and cannot be denied, that our Saviour commanded his Apoſtles to *baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt;* and that the Apoſtles, in their epiſtles, do in their moſt uſual form of benediction join theſe three together. And it is yet further certain, that not only the name and title of *God*, but the moſt incommunicable properties and perfections of the Deity, are in ſcripture frequently aſcribed to the Son and the Holy Ghoſt; one property only excepted, which is peculiar to the Father, as he is the principle and fountain of the Deity, That he is of himſelf, and of no other; which is not, nor can be ſaid of the Son and Holy Ghoſt.

Now, let any man ſhew any plain and downright contradiction in all this; or any other difficulty beſides this, that the particular manner of the exiſtence of theſe three differences or perſons in the divine nature, expreſſed in ſcripture by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, is incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings, and inexplicable by us. In which, I do not

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ſee what abſurdity there is, ſince our adverſaries cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whoſe exiſtence we can neither comprehend nor explain.

Let us now ſee, whether the opinion of our adverſaries hath not greater difficulties in it, and more palpable abſurdities following from it. They ſay, that the Son of God is a mere creature; not God by nature, and yet truly and really God by office, and by divine appointment and conſtitution; to whom the very ſame honour and worſhip is to be given, which we give to him who is God by nature.

And can they diſcern no difficulty, no abſurdity in this? What! no abſurdity in bringing idolatry by a back-door into the Chriſtian religion, one main deſign whereof was, to baniſh idolatry out of the world? And will they in good earneſt conteſt this matter with us, that the giving divine worſhip to a mere creature is not idolatry? And can they vindicate themſelves in this point any other way, than what will in a great meaſure acquit both the Pagans and the Papiſts from the charge of idolatry?

What! no abſurdity in a God as it were but of yeſterday; in a creature-god; in a God merely by poſitive inſtitution: and this in oppoſition to a plain moral precept of eternal obligation, and to the fixed and immutable nature and reaſon of things?

So that, to avoid the ſhadow and appearance of a plurality of deities, they run really into it, and, for any thing I can ſee, into downright idolatry, by *worſhipping a creature beſides the creator, who is bleſſed for ever*, Rom. i. 25.

They can by no means allow two Gods by nature: no more can we. But they can willingly admit of two Gods; the one by nature, and the other by office; to whom they are content to pay the ſame honour, which is due to him who is God by nature. Provided Chriſt will be contented to be but a creature, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in reaſon is fit.

And do they ſee no abſurdity in all this; nothing that is contrary to reaſon and good ſenſe; nothing that

feels like inconſiſtency and contradiction? Do they conſider how often God hath declared, that *he will not give his glory to another?* and that the Apoſtle deſcribes idolatry to be the giving ſervice, or worſhip, to things *which by nature are no gods?* Gal. iv. 8.

Surely, if reaſon, guided by divine revelation, were to chuſe a god, it would make choice of one who is declared in ſcripture to be *the only begotten of the Father, the firſt and the laſt, the beginning and the end, the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever,* much rather than a mere creature, who did not begin to be till about ſeventeen hundred years ago.

I only propoſe theſe things, without any artificial aggravation, to their moſt ſerious and impartial conſideration; after which I cannot think that theſe great maſters of reaſon can think it ſo eaſy a matter to extricate themſelves out of theſe difficulties. The God of truth lead us into all truth, and enlighten the minds of thoſe who are in error, and *give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,* for his ſake who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſaid upon this argument, which I am ſenſible is mere controverſy: a thing which I ſeldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my text, which is ſo very proper for this ſeaſon, hath almoſt neceſſarily engaged me in it; beſides that I think it a point of that concernment, that all Chriſtians ought to be well inſtructed in it. And I have choſen rather once for all to handle it fully, and to go to the bottom of it, than in every ſermon to be ſlirting at it, without ſaying any thing to the purpoſe againſt it: a way which, in my opinion, is neither proper to eſtabliſh men in the truth, nor to convince them of their error.

I ſhall only at preſent make this ſhort reflexion upon the whole: That we ought to treat the holy ſcriptures as the oracles of God, with all reverence and ſubmiſſion of mind to the doctrine therein revealed; and to interpret them with that candour and ſimplicity which is due to the ſincere declarations of God, intended for the inſtruction, and not for the deception and deluſion of men: I ſay, we ſhould treat them as the oracles of God, and not

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like the doubtful oracles of the Heathen deities, that is in truth of the devil; which were contrived and calculated on purpoſe to deceive, containing, and for the moſt part intending a ſenſe directly contrary to the appearing and moſt obvious meaning of the words: for the devil was the firſt author of equivocation; though the Jeſuits have ſince made it a lawful way of lying, which their father, of whom they learned it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deſerves likewiſe to be very well conſidered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the exceptions of the church of Rome againſt the holy ſcriptures being a ſufficient and certain rule of faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plaineſt texts imaginable, for the eſtabliſhing of doctrines of greateſt moment in the Chriſtian religion, by their remote and wreſted interpretation of them: which way of dealing with them, ſeems to be really more contumelious to thoſe holy oracles, than the downright rejecting of their authority; becauſe this is a fair and open way of attacking them; whereas the other is an inſidious, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earneſt believe the divine authority of the holy ſcriptures, let us take all our doctrines and opinions from thoſe clear fountains of truth, not diſturbed and darkened by ſearching anxiouſly into all the poſſible ſenſes that the ſeveral words and expreſſions of ſcripture can bear, and by forcing that ſenſe upon them which is moſt remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and paſſing by that ſenſe which is moſt obvious and eaſy to the common apprehenſion of any unbiaſſed and impartial reader. This is to uſe the holy ſcriptures as the church of Rome hath done many holy and good men whom they are pleaſed to brand with the odious name of hereticks, to torture them till they ſpeak the mind of their tormentors, though never ſo contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole diſcourſe with a ſaying which I heard from a great and judicious man, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam:* "I love no doctrines "in divinity which ſtand ſo very much upon quirk and "ſubtilty."

And

And I cannot upon this occaſion forbear to ſay, that thoſe doctrines of religion and thoſe interpretations of ſcripture have ever been to me the moſt ſuſpected, which need abundance of wit, and a great many criticiſms, to make them out. And, conſidering the wiſdom and goodneſs of almighty God, I cannot poſſibly believe, but that all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed by Chriſtians, in order to their eternal ſalvation, are plainly contained in the holy ſcriptures. God ſurely hath not dealt ſo hardly with mankind, as to make any thing neceſſary to be believed or practiſed by us, which he hath not made ſufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it ſhould be impoſſible for any man to be ſaved, and to get to heaven, without a great deal of learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greateſt part of mankind have no learning at all. It was well ſaid by Eraſmus, "That it "was never well with the Chriſtian world ſince it began "to be a matter of ſo much ſubtilty and wit for a man "to be a true Chriſtian."

SERMON XLV.

Concerning the incarnation of Chriſt.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 21. 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The word was made fleſh.

The third ſermon on this text.

THE laſt year about this time, and upon the ſame occaſion of the annual commemoration of the incarnation and nativity of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, I began to diſcourſe to you upon theſe words; in which I told you were contained three great points concerning

concerning our Saviour, the author and founder of our religion.

1. His incarnation: *The Word was made* (or became) *flesh.*

2. His life and conversation here among us: *And dwelt among us; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his tabernacle among us*; he lived here below in this world, and for some time made his residence and abode with us.

3. That in this state of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilst he appeared as a man, and lived amongst us, there were great and glorious testimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God; and that in so peculiar a manner, as no creature can be said to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the first of these, namely, his incarnation: *The Word was made flesh.* For the full and clear explication of which words, I proposed to consider these two things.

First, The person here spoken of, and who it is that is here said to be incarnate, or *made flesh*, namely, *the Word.* And this I have handled at large in my two former discourses upon this text. I shall now proceed, in the

Second place, to give some account of the nature and manner of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath thought fit to reveal and declare this mystery to us. *The Word was made flesh*; that is, he who is personally called *the Word*, and whom the Evangelist hath so fully and clearly described in the beginning of his gospel, he became flesh; that is, assumed our nature, and became man; for so the word *flesh* is frequently used in scripture for man, or human nature.

So that, by *the Word's becoming flesh*, that is, man, the Evangelist did not only intend to express to us, that he assumed a human body without a soul, but that he became a perfect man, consisting of soul and body united. It is very probable indeed, that the Evangelist did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of humanity, to denote to us the great condescension of the Son of God, in assuming our nature, with

with all its infirmities, and becoming ſubject to frailty and mortality for our ſake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this propoſition, *The Word was made fleſh*, I ſhall, in a further proſecution of this argument, take into conſideration theſe three things.

1. I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in this expreſſion of *the Word's being made fleſh*.

2. I ſhall conſider the objections which are commonly brought againſt this incarnation of the Son of God, from the ſeeming impoſſibility or incongruity of the thing.

3. And becauſe, after all that can be ſaid in anſwer to thoſe objections, it may ſtill appear to us very ſtrange, that God, who could, without all this circumſtance, and condeſcenſion even almoſt beneath the majeſty of the great God, at leaſt, as we are apt to think, have given laws to mankind, and have offered forgiveneſs of ſins, and eternal life, upon their repentance for ſins paſt, and ſincere though imperfect obedience for the future: I ſay, it may ſeem ſtrange, that, notwithſtanding this, God ſhould yet make choice of this way and method of our ſalvation: I ſhall therefore, in the laſt place, endeavour, to give ſome probable account of this ſtrange and wonderful diſpenſation; and ſhew, that it was done in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of mankind; and that, when it is thoroughly conſidered, it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wiſdom of this world would have been apt to deviſe and pitch upon. And in all this I ſhall all along take either the plain declarations of ſcripture, or the pregnant intimations of it, for my ground and guide.

I. I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in this expreſſion of *the Word's being made fleſh*; namely, theſe five things.

1. The truth and reality of the thing; that the Son of God did not only appear in the form of human fleſh, but did really aſſume it. *The Word was made fleſh*, as the Evangeliſt expreſsly declares. For if this had been only a phantaſm and apparition, as ſome hereticks of old did fancy,

fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of angels mentioned in the Old Teſtament, ſudden, and of ſhort continuance; and would, after a little while, have vaniſhed and diſappeared. But *he dwelt among us*, and converſed familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together. And the ſcripture uſeth all the expreſſions which are proper to ſignify a real man, and a real human body; and there were all the ſigns and evidences of reality that could be: for *the Word* is ſaid to be *made fleſh*; and Chriſt is ſaid to be *of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh*, and to be *made of a woman*; and all this to ſhew, that he was a real man, and had a real and ſubſtantial body: for he was born, and, by degrees, grew up to be a man, and did perform all ſuch actions as are natural and proper to men. He continued a great while in the world, and at laſt ſuffered and died, and was laid in the grave. He did not vaniſh and diſappear like a phantaſm or ſpirit, but he died like other men; and his body was raiſed again out of the grave; and, after he was riſen, he converſed forty days upon earth, and permitted his body to be handled; and, laſt of all, was viſibly taken up into heaven.

So that either we muſt grant him to have had a real body, or we have cauſe to doubt whether all mankind be not mere phantaſms and apparitions: for greater evidence no man can give, that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and ſubſtantial body, than the Son of God did *in the days of his fleſh*. It is to me very wonderful, upon what ground, or indeed to what end, the hereticks of old, Marcion and others, did deny the reality of Chriſt's fleſh. Surely they had a great mind to be hereticks, who took up ſo ſenſeleſs an opinion, for no reaſon, and to no purpoſe.

2. Another thing implied in *the Word's being made fleſh* is, that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of men: *The Word was made fleſh*; that is, became man; for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be often uſed in ſcripture. And this the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews takes very ſpecial notice of as a great grace and favour of God to mankind, that his Son appeared in our nature, and conſequently for our ſalvation; as it is ſaid in the Nicene creed, "who for us

"men,

" men, and for our ſalvation, came down from heaven, " and was incarnate," &c. *For verily* (ſays the Apoſtle, Heb. ii. 16.) *he took not on him the nature of angels, but the ſeed of Abraham;* οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, *he did not aſſume the angelical nature;* ſo our tranſlators underſtood the phraſe: but the word alſo ſignifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *aſſume* or *take on him. He did not take hold of the angels* when they were falling, but ſuffered them to lapſe irrecoverably into miſery and ruin; but *he took hold* of human nature when it was falling, and particularly *of the ſeed of Abraham;* and by *the ſeed of Abraham*, that is, by himſelf, *in whom all the nations of the earth were bleſſed*, he brought ſalvation, firſt to the Jews, and then to the reſt of mankind. The Apoſtle chuſes to derive this bleſſing from Abraham, that ſo he might bring it nearer to the Jews, to whom he wrote this epiſtle; and might thereby more effectually recommend the goſpel to them, and the glad tidings of that great ſalvation in which they had ſo peculiar an intereſt.

And it is ſome confirmation of the interpretation I have given of that expreſſion, *He took not on him*, &c. that the Evangeliſt uſes the very ſame word for *taking hold of* one that was ready to ſink; for ſo it is ſaid of St. Peter when he was *ready to ſink*, that, Matth. xiv. 31. *Chriſt put forth his hand,* καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος *and caught hold of him*, and ſaved him from drowning. And thus the Son of God caught hold of mankind, which was ready to ſink into eternal perdition. He *laid hold of* our nature, or, as it is expreſſed in the ſame chapter, *he took part of fleſh and blood*, that in our nature he might be capable of effecting our redemption and deliverance.

But it is no where ſaid in ſcripture, not the leaſt intimation given there, that the Son of God ever ſhewed ſuch grace and favour to the angels; but *the Word became fleſh*, that is, became man. He did not aſſume the angelical nature, but was contented to be clothed with the rags of humanity, and to be *made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*, that is, of ſinful man.

3. This expreſſion, of *the Word's being made fleſh*, may further imply his aſſuming the infirmities and ſubmitting to the miſeries of human nature. This I collect from

from the word *fleſh*, by which the ſcripture often uſes to expreſs our frail and mortal nature. The Son of God did not only condeſcend to be made man, but alſo to become mortal and miſerable for our ſakes. He ſubmitted to all thoſe things which are accounted moſt grievous and calamitous to human nature; to hunger and want, to ſhame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a moſt cruel and diſgraceful death: ſo that in this ſenſe alſo he became fleſh, not only by being clothed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and ſufferings of it; of which he had a greater ſhare than any of the ſons of men ever had: for never was ſorrow like to his ſorrow, nor ſufferings like to his ſufferings; the weight and bitterneſs whereof was ſuch, as to wring from him, the meekeſt and moſt patient endurer of ſufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

4. In this expreſſion, *The Word was made fleſh*, is likewiſe implied the union of the divinity with human nature in one perſon. And this the text expreſſeth in ſuch words, as ſeem to ſignify a moſt perfect, and intimate, and vital union of the divine and human natures of Chriſt in one perſon. *The Word was made* (or became) *fleſh*: which what elſe can it ſignify, but one of theſe two things: either that the eternal Word, and only begotten Son of God, was changed into a man, which is not only impoſſible to be, but impious to imagine; or elſe, that the Son of God did aſſume our nature, and became man, by his divinity being united to human nature, as the ſoul is vitally united to the body, without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or ſwallowed up by it, as the Eutychian hereticks fancied the human nature of Chriſt to be ſwallowed up of his divinity? which had it been ſo, St. John had expreſſed himſelf very untowardly, when he ſays, *The Word became fleſh*; for it had been quite contrary, and fleſh had become the Word, being changed into it, and ſwallowed up by it, and loſt in it.

The only thing then that we can reaſonably imagine to be the meaning of this expreſſion, is this, that the Son of God aſſumed our nature, and united himſelf with it, as our ſouls are united with our bodies: and as the

ſoul and body united make one perſon, and yet retain their diſtinct natures and properties; ſo may we conceive the divine and human natures in Chriſt to be united into one perſon; and this without any change or confuſion of the two natures.

I ſay, the divinity united itſelf with human nature: for though fleſh be only mentioned in the text, yet he did not only aſſume a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris and his followers, upon a miſtake of this, and ſome other texts of ſcripture; but he aſſumed the whole human nature; that is, a human ſoul united to a real and natural body: for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be frequently uſed in ſcripture, not only for the body, but for the whole man, by an uſual figure of ſpeech: as, on the other hand, *ſoul* is frequently uſed for the whole man or perſon. So many ſouls are ſaid to have gone down with Jacob into Egypt; that is, ſo many perſons.

But this I need not inſiſt longer upon, our Saviour being ſo frequently in ſcripture, and ſo expreſsly, ſaid to be a man; which could with no propriety of ſpeech have been ſaid, had he only aſſumed a human body: nor could he have been ſaid to have been *made in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*, had he only had a human body, but not a ſoul: for then the meaning muſt have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*, that is, like to a man, that only excepted which chiefly makes the man; that is, the ſoul: and the addition of thoſe words, *ſin only excepted*, had been no leſs ſtrange; becauſe a human body without a ſoul, is neither capable of being ſaid to have ſin, or to be without it.

And this may ſuffice to have been ſpoken in general concerning that great myſtery of the hypoſtatical (as they that love hard words love to call it) or perſonal union of the divine and human natures in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour. In the more particular explication whereof it is not ſafe for our ſhallow underſtandings to wade farther than the ſcripture goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth, and loſe ourſelves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this preſent ſtate of darkneſs and imperfection to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It

ought

ought to be thought ſufficient, that the ſcripture, ſpeaking of the ſame perſon, Jeſus Chriſt our bleſſed Saviour, doth frequently and expreſsly call him both *God* and *man:* which how it can be ſo eaſily conceived upon any other ſuppoſition than that of the union of the divine and human natures in one perſon, I muſt confeſs that I am not able to comprehend.

5. and laſtly, All this which I have ſhewn to be implied in this propoſition, *The Word was made fleſh*, does ſignify to us the wonderful and amazing condeſcenſion and love of God to mankind, in ſending his Son into the world, and ſubmitting him to this way and method for our ſalvation and recovery. *The Word was made, fleſh:* what a ſtep is here made in order to the reconciling of men to God? from heaven to earth; from the top of glory and majeſty to the loweſt gulf of meanneſs and miſery! The Evangeliſt ſeems here to uſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the meaneſt and vileſt part of humanity, to expreſs to us how low the Son of God was contented to ſtoop for the redemption of man. *The Word was made fleſh:* two terms at the greateſt diſtance from one another, are here brought together; the Son of God is here expreſſed to us by one of his higheſt and moſt glorious titles, *the Word;* which imports both *power* and *wiſdom;* 1 Cor. i. 24. *Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God*, as the Apoſtle calls him: and human nature is here deſcribed by its vileſt part, *fleſh;* which imports frailty and infirmity. *The Word became fleſh;* that is, ſubmitted to that from which it was at the greateſt diſtance: he who was *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God*, ſubmitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miſerable man; not only to aſſume our nature, but to put on all the infirmities, and which is the greateſt of all, the mortality of it.

And this is the *great myſtery of godlineſs*, that is, of the Chriſtian religion, that *God* ſhould be *manifeſted in the fleſh*, and become man, with a moſt gracious and merciful deſign, to bring man back again to God; that he ſhould become a miſerable and a mortal man, to ſave us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of everlaſting life; that the Son of God ſhould condeſcend to inhabit our vile nature, to wear rags, and to become a

beggar for our ſakes: and all this, not only to repair thoſe diſmal ruins which ſin had made in it, and to reſtore us to our former eſtate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees to bring us to a ſtate of much greater perfection and happineſs than that from which we fell:

And that he ſhould become man on purpoſe that he might *dwell among us*, and converſe with us, and thoroughly inſtruct us in our duty; and ſhew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly doctrine, and, as it were, take us by the hand, and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar example of a moſt blameleſs and holy life; ſhewing us how God himſelf thought fit to live in this world, when he was pleaſed to become man:

That by converſing with us in the likeneſs and nature of man, he might become a human, and in ſome ſort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging example of innocency and goodneſs, of meekneſs and humility, of patience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God under the ſoreſt afflictions and ſufferings; and, in a word, a moſt perfect pattern of a divine and heavenly converſation upon earth:

And that by this means we might, for our greater encouragement in holineſs and virtue, ſee all that which the law of God requires of us, exemplified in our nature, and really performed and practiſed by a man like ourſelves:

And that likewiſe in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the two great enemies of our ſalvation, the world, and the devil; and by firſt ſuffering death, and then overcoming it, and by reſcuing our nature from the power of it by his reſurrection from the dead, he might *deliver us from the fear of death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a bleſſed immortality: for by aſſuming our frail and mortal nature, he became capable of ſuffering, and of ſhedding his precious blood for us, and by that means of purchaſing *forgiveneſs of ſins*, and *eternal redemption for us*:

And further yet, that, by being ſubject to the miſeries and infirmities of humanity, he might from his own experience, the ſureſt and moſt ſenſible ſort of knowledge and inſtruction, learn to have a more compaſſionate

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ſenſe of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiſerate us in all our ſufferings and temptations, and more ready to ſuccour us labouring under them:

And, finally, that, as a reward of his obedience and ſufferings in our nature, he might in the ſame nature be *exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty on high*, there to continue *for ever to make interceſſion for us*.

II. I ſhall, in the next place, conſider the objections againſt the incarnation of the Son of God, from the ſuppoſed impoſſibility and incongruity of the thing. I ſhall mention three, and endeavour, in as few words as I can, to give a clear and ſatisfactory anſwer to them.

1. It is objected, That the incarnation of the Son of God, as I have explained it, neceſſarily ſuppoſing an union of the divinity with human nature, is, if not altogether impoſſible, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now, that there is no impoſſibility in the thing, ſeems to be very evident from the inſtance whereby I have endeavoured to illuſtrate it, of the union between the ſoul and the body of man, which we muſt acknowledge to be a thing poſſible, becauſe we are ſure that it is; and yet no man can explain, either to himſelf, or to any one elſe, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be: but, for all that, we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is ſo.

And is it not every whit as poſſible for God, if he ſo pleaſe, to unite himſelf to human nature, as it is for the ſoul to be united to the body? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reaſon to be any prejudice againſt the truth and certainty of the thing. This indeed may make it ſeem ſtrange to us, but by no means incredible; becauſe we do moſt firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whoſe being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted principle, which no man can gainſay, That to aſſure us that a thing really is, it is not neceſſary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be: it is ſufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impoſſible; and of that we have the very beſt demonſtration that can be, if we be ſure that it is.

2. Suppoſing this thing to be poſſible, and capable in any meaſure to be underſtood, which yet I have ſhewn

not to be neceſſary to our firm belief of it; it is further objected, That it ſeems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the dignity of the Son of God, to be united to human nature, and to ſubmit to ſo near an alliance with that which is ſo very mean and deſpicable; yea to be infinitely more below him, than for the greateſt prince in this world to match with the pooreſt and moſt contemptible beggar.

But herein ſurely we meaſure God too much by ourſelves; and becauſe we who are evil have ſeldom ſo much goodneſs as to ſtoop beneath ourſelves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not ſo much goodneſs neither: and becauſe our ill-nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not ſuffer us to do it, we preſently conclude that it doth not become God. But what Pliny ſaid to the Emperor Trajan concerning earthly kings and potentates, is much more true of the Lord of glory, the great King of heaven and earth: *Cui nihil ad augendum faſtigium ſupereſt, hoc uno modo creſcere poteſt, ſi ſeipſum ſubmittat, ſecurus magnitudinis ſuæ:* "He that is at the top, and can riſe "no higher, hath yet this one way left to become great"er, by ſtooping beneath himſelf;" which he may very ſafely do, "being ſecure of his own greatneſs." The lower any being, be he never ſo high, condeſcends to do good, the glory of his goodneſs ſhines ſo much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and ſtiff to bend, too perverſe and ill-natured to ſtoop beneath their own little greatneſs for the good of others: but God, whoſe *ways are not as our ways*, and whoſe *thoughts are* as much *above our* low and narrow *thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth*, did not diſdain, nor think it below him to become man for the good of mankind, and, as much as the divinity is capable of being ſo, to become miſerable to make us happy. We may be afraid, that if we humble ourſelves, we ſhall be deſpiſed; that if we ſtoop, others will get above us, and trample upon us: but God, though he condeſcend never ſo low, is ſtill ſecure of his own greatneſs, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right reaſon, it was no real diminution or diſparagement to the Son of God,

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to become man for the ſalvation of mankind; but, on the contrary, it was a moſt glorious humility, and the greateſt inſtance of the trueſt goodneſs that ever was. And therefore the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, Heb. v. 4. 5. when he ſays, that *Chriſt glorified not himſelf to be made an high prieſt, but was appointed of God* to this office, *as was Aaron*, does hereby ſeem to intimate, that it was a glory to the Son of God to be made a high prieſt for the ſons of men: for though it was a ſtrange condeſcenſion, yet was it likewiſe a moſt wonderful argument of his goodneſs, which is the higheſt glory of the divine nature.

In ſhort, if God for our ſakes did ſubmit himſelf to a condition which we may think did leſs become him, here is great cauſe of thankfulneſs, but none ſurely of cavil and exception. We have infinite reaſon to acknowledge and admire his goodneſs, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindneſs, and to quarrel with him for having deſcended ſo much beneath himſelf, to teſtify his love to us, and his tender concernment for our happineſs. Beſides that when we have ſaid all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himſelf to be the beſt and moſt competent judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counſel of any of his creatures, what will beſt become him in this or any other caſe: Job xxxiii. 12. 13. *Behold in this thou art not juſt: I will anſwer thee, that God is greater than man. Why doſt thou diſpute againſt him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

3. If our reaſon could get over this difficulty, and admit that God might become man; yet it ſeems very unſuitable to the Son of God, and to his great deſign of inſtructing and reforming mankind, to appear in ſo low and ſuffering a condition. This, to the Heathen philoſophers, who, as the Apoſtle tells us, *by wiſdom knew not God*, did not only ſeem unreaſonable, but even ridiculous. So St. Paul tells us: *We* (ſays he, 1 Cor. i. 23.) *preach Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs.* To think that ſo poor and mean a man was fit to give laws to mankind, and to awe the minds of men by the authority of his doctrine; that one who was put to death himſelf, ſhould be believed by others, when he promiſed to them life and immortality

mortality in another world, could not but appear very ſtrange and unreaſonable.

For anſwer to this, beſides other excellent reaſons and ends which the ſcripture expreſsly aſſigns of our bleſſed Saviour's humiliation, in his aſſuming our nature, with the frailties and miſeries of it; as, that he might be a teacher, and an example to us; that, by his bitter paſſion, he might make expiation for ſin, and ſet us a pattern of the greateſt meekneſs and patience under the greateſt provocations and ſufferings; that, having ſuffered ſo grievouſly himſelf, he might know how to commiſerate and pity us in all our temptations and ſufferings; that *by death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver thoſe who through fear of death, were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage:* I ſay, beſides all this, it was of great uſe that the great teacher and reformer of mankind ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the world by this conſideration, that the Son of God, and the very beſt man that ever was, was a beggar, and *had not where to lay his head*; and likewiſe to convince men of theſe two great truths, That God may grievouſly afflict thoſe whom he dearly loves; and, That it is poſſible for men to be innocent and contented, in the midſt of poverty, and reproach, and ſufferings.

Had our bleſſed Saviour appeared in the perſon and pomp of a great temporal prince, the influence of his authority and example would probably have made more hypocrites and ſervile converts, but not have perſuaded men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great arguments that muſt do that, muſt not be fetched from the pomp and proſperity of this world, but from the great and eternal recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our obſervation, that nothing puzzled Cæſar Vaninus, who was perhaps the firſt, and the only martyr for Atheiſm that ever was; I ſay, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not, from the hiſtory of our Saviour's life and actions, written by the Evangeliſts with ſo native a ſimplicity, faſten upon him any probable imputation of a ſecular intereſt and deſign in any thing that he ſaid or did. No doubt but Vaninus,

ninus, before he made this acknowledgment, had ſearched very narrowly into this matter; and could he have found any colour for ſuch an imputation, he would have thought it ſufficient to have blaſted both him and his religion.

You may be pleaſed to conſider further, that it was the opinion of the wiſeſt Jews, that the beſt men, the children of God, who called God their father, were many times expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings and reproaches, for the trial of their faith, and meekneſs, and patience; as we ſee at large in the Wiſdom of Solomon; where, ſpeaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in ſaying after this manner, chap. ii. 12. 13. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. *Let us lie in wait for the righteous; becauſe he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the tranſgreſſings of our youth. He profeſſeth to have the knowledge of God; and he calleth himſelf the child of the Lord. He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other mens; his ways are of another faſhion. We are eſteemed of him as counterfeits: he abſtaineth from our ways as from filthineſs: he pronounceth the end of the juſt to be bleſſed, and maketh his boaſt that God is his father. Let us ſee if his words be true, and what ſhall happen in the end of him. For if the juſt man be the ſon of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his enemies. Let us examine him with deſpitefulneſs and torture, that we may know his meekneſs, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him to a ſhameful death*, &c.

This is ſo exact a character of our bleſſed Saviour, both in reſpect of the holineſs and innocency of his life, and of the reproaches and ſufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious Jews, who perſecuted him all his life, and at laſt conſpired his death, that whoever reads this paſſage, can hardly forbear to think it a prophetical deſcription of the innocency and ſufferings of the bleſſed Jeſus: for he certainly, in the moſt eminent manner, was *the Son of God*, being called by the Evangeliſt, *the only begotten of the Father*.

Or if this was not a prediction concerning our bleſſed Saviour, yet thus much at leaſt may be concluded from it,

it, that, in the judgment of the wiſeſt among the Jews, it was not unworthy of the goodneſs and wiſdom of the divine providence, to permit the beſt man to be ſo ill treated by wicked men; and further, that, in their judgment, the innocency and virtues of an eminently righteous man are then ſet off to the beſt advantage, and do ſhine forth with the greateſt luſtre, when he is under the hardeſt circumſtances of ſuffering and perſecution from an evil world.

Add to this likewiſe, that the beſt and wiſeſt of the Heathen philoſophers do frequently inculcate ſuch doctrines as theſe: That "worldly greatneſs and power "are not to be admired, but rather to be deſpiſed by a "wiſe man:" That "men may be very good, and dear "to the gods, and yet liable to the greateſt miſeries and "ſufferings in this world:" That "whoever ſuffers "unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt te"ſtimony to goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recom"mend piety and virtue, as things of greater value than "the eaſe and pleaſure of this preſent life:" Nay further, That "a good man, caſt into the hardeſt circum"ſtances of poverty and miſery, of reproach and ſuffer"ing, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the mini"ſter, and apoſtle, and preacher of God to mankind:" which are the very words of Arrian, a Heathen philoſopher, in his diſcourſes of Epictetus. Now, ſurely, they who ſay ſuch things, have no reaſon to object to our bleſſed Saviour's low and ſuffering condition, as miſbecoming one that was to be the great teacher and reformer of the world.

And as to that part of the objection, That he who ſo freely promiſed immortality to others, could not, or however did not ſave himſelf from death; this vaniſheth into nothing, when we conſider that he reſcued himſelf from the power of the grave. And it is ſo far from being ridiculous, to rely upon his promiſe of raiſing us up from the dead, that the objection itſelf is really ſo; for can any thing be more reaſonable, than to rely upon him for our hopes of immortality, who, by riſing from the grave himſelf, and by conquering the powers of death and darkneſs, and triumphing openly over them by his viſible aſcenſion into heaven, hath given ſo plain and

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ſenſible a demonſtration to all mankind, that he is able to make good to the uttermoſt all the glorious promiſes which he hath made to us of a bleſſed reſurrection to eternal life and happineſs in another world? To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVI.

Concerning the incarnation of Chriſt.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 28. 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

The fourth ſermon on this text.

III. THE third and laſt thing which I propoſed upon this argument, of the incarnation of the Son of God, was, to give ſome account of this diſpenſation; and to ſhew that the wiſdom of God thought fit thus to order things in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of mankind; and that when all things are duly weighed and conſidered, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wiſdom of men would have been moſt apt to deviſe and pitch upon.

And it is the more neceſſary to give ſome account of this matter, becauſe, after all that hath hitherto been ſaid in anſwer to the objections againſt it, it may ſtill ſeem very ſtrange to a conſidering man, that God, who could without all this circumſtance and condeſcenſion have done the buſineſs for which his Son came into the world, and appeared in our nature; that is, could have given the ſame laws to mankind, and have offered to us the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and eternal life, upon our repentance for ſins paſt, and a ſincere endeavour of obedience for the future: I ſay, that notwithſtanding this, he

he ſhould yet make choice of this way for the redemption and recovery of fallen man, by ſending his Son in our nature to accompliſh this deſign.

And, in the handling of this argument, I ſhall, as I ſaid before, all along take the expreſs declarations, or at leaſt the pregnant intimations of ſcripture for my ground and guide; it being always ſafeſt to take the reaſons of the divine counſels and actions from God himſelf. And, in the

Firſt place, I make no manner of doubt to ſay, that it would be a great preſumption and boldneſs in any man to affirm, that the infinite wiſdom of God could not have brought about the ſalvation of men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why ſhould we take upon us to ſet limits to infinite wiſdom, and pretend to know the utmoſt extent of it? But ſince God hath been pleaſed to pitch upon this way rather than any other, this ſurely ought to be reaſon enough to ſatisfy us of the peculiar wiſdom and fitneſs of it, whether the particular reaſons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble argument, and well worthy our conſideration, to inquire into the reaſons of this diſpenſation, and to aſſign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon myſteries and miracles in religion to be much of the ſame nature; and that a great reverence is due to both where they are certain, and neceſſary in the nature and reaſon of the thing; but neither of them are eaſily to be admitted, without neceſſity and very good evidence.

Secondly, I conſider, in the next place, that, in the ſeveral revelations which God hath made of himſelf to mankind, he hath, with great condeſcenſion, accommodated himſelf, both as to the manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumſtances of the perſons and people to whom they were made.

Particularly we find, that the diſpenſation of God towards the Jewiſh nation was full of condeſcenſion to the temper, and prejudices, and other circumſtances of that people. For the religion and laws which God gave them, were far from being the beſt and moſt perfect in themſelves: in which ſenſe ſome underſtand that paſſage

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in the Prophet Ezekiel, where it is ſaid, that God *gave them ſtatutes which were not good*; that is, very imperfect in compariſon of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet ſuch as were very well ſuited and fitted to their preſent capacity and circumſtances.

Thirdly, I obſerve yet further, that though the Chriſtian religion, as to the main and ſubſtance of it, be a moſt perfect inſtitution, being the law of nature revived and perfected; yet, upon a due conſideration of things, it cannot be denied, that the manner and circumſtances of this diſpenſation are full of condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of mankind, and very much accommodated to the moſt common and deeply radicated prejudices of men concerning God and religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the minds of men, by ſubſtituting ſomething in the place of them, of as near a compliance with them, as was conſiſtent with the honour of almighty God, and the great deſign of the Chriſtian religion.

It is not eaſy to give a certain account of the true original of ſome notions and prejudices concerning God and religion which have generally obtained in the world, in that variety of religions, and the different ways of worſhip and ſuperſtition which have been in ſeveral nations of the earth. But, in hiſtory and fact, this is certain, that ſome notions, and thoſe very groſs and erroneous, did almoſt univerſally prevail even among thoſe who did extremely differ in the particular forms and modes of their ſuperſtition.

And though ſome of theſe were much more tolerable than others; yet God ſeems to have had great conſideration of ſome very weak and groſs apprehenſions of mankind concerning religion. And as, in ſome of the laws given by Moſes, God was pleaſed particularly to conſider the hardneſs of the hearts of that people; ſo he ſeems likewiſe to have very much ſuited the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and the method of our ſalvation, by the incarnation and ſufferings of his Son, to the common prejudices of mankind, eſpecially of the Heathen world, whoſe minds were leſs prepared for this diſpenſation than the Jews, if we conſider the light and advantages which the Jewiſh nation had above the Gentile world;

that ſo, by this means and method, he might wean them by degrees from their groſs conceptions of things, and rectify more eaſily their wrong apprehenſions, by gratifying them in ſome meaſure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakneſs, by bending and accommodating the way and method of our ſalvation to our weak capacity, and imperfect conceptions of things.

Fourthly, And that God hath done this in the diſpenſation of the goſpel, will, I think, very plainly appear in the following inſtances: in moſt of which I ſhall be very brief, and only inſiſt ſomewhat more largely upon the laſt of them.

1. The world was much given to admire myſteries in religion. The Jews had theirs; ſeveral of which, by God's own appointment, were reſerved and kept ſecret in a great meaſure from the people; others were added by the ſuperſtition of after ages, and held in equal, or rather greater veneration than the former. And the Heathen likewiſe had theirs; the devil always affecting to imitate God ſo far as ſerved his wicked and malicious deſign of ſeducing mankind into idolatry, and the worſhip of himſelf; and therefore the ſcripture always ſpeaks of the Heathen idolatry, as the worſhip of devils, and not of God. So that almoſt every nation had their peculiar and celebrated myſteries; moſt of which were either very odd and fantaſtical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhumane and cruel, and every way unworthy of the Deity.

But the great myſtery of the Chriſtian religion, the incarnation of the Son of God, or, as the Apoſtle calls it, *God manifeſted in the fleſh*, was ſuch a myſtery, as, for the greatneſs and wonderfulneſs, for the infinite mercy and condeſcenſion of it, did obſcure and ſwallow up all other myſteries: for which reaſon the Apoſtle, in alluſion to the Heathen myſteries, and in contempt of them, ſpeaking of the great myſtery of the Chriſtian religion, ſays, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Without controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God was manifeſted in the fleſh*, &c. Since the world had ſuch an admiration for myſteries, he inſtanceth in that which was a myſtery indeed; a myſtery beyond all diſpute, and beyond all compariſon.

2. There was likewiſe a great inclination in mankind to

to the worſhip of a viſible and ſenſible Deity. And this was a main root and ſource of the various idolatries in the Heathen world. Now, to take men off from this, God was pleaſed to appear in our nature, that they who were ſo fond of a viſible Deity, might have one to whom they might pay divine worſhip without danger of idolatry, and without injury to the divine nature; even a true and natural image of God the Father, the fountain of the Deity; or, as the Apoſtle to the Hebrews deſcribes the Son of God, the reſplendency or *brightneſs of his* Father's *glory, and the expreſs* character or *image of his perſon,* Heb. i. 2.

3. Another notion which had generally obtained among mankind, was concerning the expiation of the ſins of men, and appeaſing the offended Deity, by ſacrifice; upon which they ſuppoſed the puniſhment due to the ſinner was transferred, to exempt him from it; eſpecially by the ſacrifices of men, which had almoſt univerſally prevailed in the Gentile world.

And this notion of the expiation of ſin by ſacrifices of one kind or other, ſeems to have obtained very early in the world, and, among all other ways of divine worſhip, to have found the moſt univerſal reception in all times and places. And indeed, a great part of the Jewiſh religion and worſhip was a plain condeſcenſion to the general apprehenſions of men concerning this way of appeaſing the Deity by ſacrifice. And the greateſt part of the Pagan religion and worſhip was likewiſe founded upon the ſame notion and opinion; which, becauſe it was ſo univerſal, ſeems to have had its original from the firſt parents of mankind, either immediately after the creation, or after the flood; and from thence, I mean as to the ſubſtance of this notion, to have been derived and propagated to all their poſterity.

And with this general notion of mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleaſed ſo far to comply, as once for all to have a general atonement made for the ſins of all mankind by the ſacrifice of his only Son, whom his wiſe providence did permit, *by wicked hands, to be crucified and ſlain.* But I ſhall not at preſent inſiſt any further upon this; which requires

a particular diſcourſe by itſelf, and may by God's aſſiſtance in due time have it.

4. Another very common notion, and very rife in the Heathen world, and a great ſource of their idolatry, was their apotheoſes, or canonizing of famous and eminent perſons, who in their lifetime had done great things, and ſome way or other been great benefactors to mankind, by advancing them after their death to the dignity of an inferior kind of gods, fit to be worſhipped by men here on earth, and to have their prayers and ſupplications addreſſed to them, as proper and powerful mediators and interceſſors for them with the ſuperior gods. To theſe they gave the titles of *heroes* and *ſemi-dei*, that is, half-gods; though the notion of a being that is juſt half infinite, ſeems to me very hard to be conceived and deſined.

Now, to take men off from this kind of idolatry, and to put an end to it, behold one in our nature *exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty on high*, to be worſhipped by men and angels; one that was the truly great benefactor of mankind; one that *was dead, and is alive again, and lives for ever more, to make interceſſion for us.*

5. To give but one inſtance more, which I have already intimated: The world was mightily bent upon addreſſing their requeſts and ſupplications, not to the Deity immediately, becauſe their ſuperſtition thought that too great a preſumption, but by ſome mediators between the gods and them, who might with advantage, in this humble manner, preſent their requeſts, ſo as to find acceptance. To this end they made uſe of the dæmons or angels, and of their heroes, or deified men, whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their prayers to the ſupreme gods; hoping, by their interceſſion, and patronage of their cauſe, to obtain a gracious anſwer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehenſion, and thereby more eaſily and effectually to extirpate this ſort of idolatry, which had been ſo long and ſo generally practiſed in the world, God was pleaſed to conſtitute and appoint one in our nature to be a perpetual advocate and interceſſor in heaven for us, to offer up

up our prayers to God his Father, and to *obtain mercy for us, and grace to help in time of need.*

And for ever to take us off from all other mediators, we are expreſsly told in ſcripture, that as there is but one God to whom we are to pray, ſo there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. by whom we are to offer up our prayers to God; and that we need not look out for any other, ſince the Apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us, that he *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he lives for ever to make interceſſion for us,* Heb. vii. 25.

And for this reaſon the church of Rome is altogether inexcuſable in this point, for introducing more mediators and interceſſors, more patrons and advocates in heaven for us; and this not only without any neceſſity, for who can add any virtue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent interceſſion of the Son of God? but likewiſe in direct contradiction to the expreſs conſtitution and appointment of God himſelf; who ſays, there is *but one Mediator between God and men;* and they ſay there ought to be many more, not only the bleſſed virgin, but all the ſaints and angels in heaven. Beſides that by this very thing they revive one notorious piece of the old Pagan idolatry, which God ſo plainly deſigned to extinguiſh, by appointing *one* only *Mediator between God and men.*

By this condeſcenſion likewiſe God hath given us the comfortable aſſurance of a moſt powerful and a perpetual interceſſor at the right hand of God in our behalf. For if we conſider Chriſt as man, and of the ſame nature with us, *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh,* ſo very nearly allied and related to us, we may eaſily believe, that he hath a moſt tender care and concernment for us; that he ſincerely wiſheth our happineſs, and will by all means ſeek to procure it, if we ourſelves, by our own wilful obſtinacy, do not hinder it, and *reſiſt* the kindneſs and *the counſel of God againſt ourſelves.* For if we be reſolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us: we muſt die in our ſins, and ſalvation itſelf cannot ſave us.

But to proceed: It cannot ſurely but be matter of greateſt conſolation to us, that *the man Chriſt Jeſus,* who is now ſo *highly exalted at the right hand of God,* and

who hath *all power in heaven and earth committed to him*, is our patron and advocate in heaven to plead our cauſe with God; ſince we cannot but think, that he who was pleaſed to become brother to us all, does bear a true affection and good-will to us; and that he who aſſumed our nature, will heartily eſpouſe our cauſe, and plead it powerfully for us, and will with all poſſible advantage recommend our petitions and requeſts to God.

But then if we conſider further, that he did not only take our nature, but likewiſe took our infirmities, and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the ſaddeſt ſufferings to which human nature is ſubject in this world, and *was tempted in all things like as we are;* this gives us ſtill greater aſſurance, that he who ſuffered and was tempted himſelf, cannot but be touched with a lively ſenſe of our infirmities, and muſt have learned by his own ſufferings to compaſſionate ours, and to be ready to ſuccour us when we are tempted, and to afford us grace and help ſuitable to all our wants and infirmities: for nothing gives us ſo juſt a ſenſe of the ſufferings of others, as the remembrance of our own, and the bitter experience of the like ſufferings and temptations in ourſelves.

And this the Apoſtle to the Hebrews doth very particularly inſiſt upon as matter of greateſt comfort and encouragement to us, that the Son of God did not only aſſume our nature, *but was made in all things like unto us*, and, during his abode here upon earth, did ſuffer, and *was tempted like as we are: for verily* (ſays the Apoſtle, Heb. ii. 16. 17. 18.) *he took not on him the nature of angels; but the ſeed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high prieſt in things pertaining to God: for in that he himſelf hath ſuffered, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.*

And again, exhorting the Jews, who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, to continue *ſtedfaſt in their profeſſion*, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings to which upon that account they were expoſed, he comforts them with this conſideration, that we have at the right hand of God ſo powerful an advocate and interceſſor for us as the Son of God, who is ſenſible of our caſe, having ſuffered the ſame

ſame things himſelf; and therefore we cannot doubt of his compaſſion to us, and readineſs to ſupport us in the like ſufferings: *Seeing then* (ſays he, Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16.) *that we have a great high prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion. For we have not an high prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.* From whence he concludes, that having ſuch an interceſſor, we may with great confidence and aſſurance addreſs our ſupplications to God for his mercy and help in all our wants and weakneſs, to ſupply the one, and to aſſiſt the other: *Let us therefore* (ſays he) *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, grace for ſeaſonable relief.*

So that our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, now that he is advanced to heaven, and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his glory and greatneſs; but, with the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to mankind, doth ſtill proſecute the deſign of our ſalvation; and, in virtue of his meritorious obedience and ſufferings, which he preſents to God continually, he offers up our prayers to him, and pleads our cauſe with him, and repreſents to him all our wants and neceſſities, and procures for us a favourable anſwer of our prayers, and ſupplies of grace and ſtrength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by virtue of this prevalent interceſſion of his with God for us, our ſins are forgiven, and our wants ſupplied, and our requeſts granted, and the gracious aſſiſtance and ſupports of God's Holy Spirit are ſeaſonably afforded to us, and we are *kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto ſalvation.* In a word, all thoſe bleſſings and benefits are procured for us by his interceſſion in heaven, which he purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth.

So that in this method of our ſalvation, beſides many other gracious condeſcenſions which God hath made to the weakneſs and prejudices of mankind, our bleſſed Saviour hath perfectly ſupplied the two great wants concerning which mankind was at ſo great a loſs before, namely, the want of an effectual expiatory ſacrifice for

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ſin upon earth, and of a prevalent mediator and interceſſor with God in heaven.

And he hath, in great goodneſs and condeſcenſion to our inveterate prejudices concerning theſe things, taken effectual care fully to ſupply both theſe wants, having *appeared in the end of the world to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*; and, in virtue of that ſacrifice *appearing* now *in heaven in the preſence of God for us*, he is become our perpetual advocate and a moſt prevalent interceſſor with God in our behalf.

For, inſtead of the various and endleſs ſacrifices of the Jews and Heathens, the Son of God *hath by one ſacrifice for ſins, perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*: and, inſtead of the mediation of dæmons and heroes to offer up our prayers to God, which were the interceſſors made uſe of among the Heathen, we have *one Mediator between God and men*, appointed by God himſelf, even the Son of God, who *is entered into heaven itſelf, there to appear in the preſence of God for us*. And to aſſure us that he commiſerates our caſe, and hath a true and tender ſenſe of our infirmities and ſufferings, the very manner of his interceſſion for us, as the ſcripture repreſents it to us, is a plain demonſtration of the thing: for he interceeds for us in heaven, by repreſenting to God his Father his ſufferings upon earth, and pleading them in our behalf. So that the very argument which he uſeth to God for us, cannot but ſtir up compaſſion in him towards us; and whilſt he repreſents his own ſufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and inſenſible of ours.

You ſee then, that, in this diſpenſation of God for our ſalvation, by ſending his Son in our nature, things are not only ſuited in great condeſcenſion to our apprehenſions, but are likewiſe in great compaſſion to us every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great patron and advocate, who was our ſacrifice and propitiation. And ſurely we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, that he who *in the days of his fleſh humbled himſelf, and became obedient to the death* for our ſakes, will be ready to do us all good offices now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon earth, now that he lives again,

again, will make interceſſion for us in heaven, and perfect that ſalvation which he purchaſed for us upon the croſs.

And therefore we find in ſcripture, that as the purchaſing of our ſalvation is aſcribed to the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, ſo the perfecting of it is attributed to his interceſſion for us at the right hand of his Father: *Wherefore* (ſays the Apoſtle to the Hebrews) *he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he liveth for ever to make interceſſion for us.* He died once to purchaſe theſe benefits, but *he lives for ever* to procure them for us, and to apply them to us. And now that he is in heaven, he is as intent upon our concernments, and lays our happineſs as much to heart, as when he dwelt here among us on earth, and poured out his blood a ſacrifice for ſin upon the croſs. And that, when he lived here below, he ſuffered, and was tempted as we are; this very conſideration gives us the greateſt aſſurance poſſible, that he is ſtill touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and hath a lively ſenſe of our ſufferings; and, conſequently, that he doth compaſſionate our caſe, and will uſe all his power and intereſt for our advantage, for our ſeaſonable ſupport and ſuccour in all our trials and ſufferings. But beſides the wonderful condeſcenſion of this diſpenſation, there is likewiſe, in the

Fifth and laſt place, a great congruity and fitneſs in the thing itſelf; and this method of our ſalvation, which the wiſdom of God hath pitched upon, is in many other reſpects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar example of holineſs and obedience in our own nature; by which we plainly ſee, that God requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf, when he ſubmitted to become man, did think fit to do: for being *made of a woman*, he was of neceſſity *made under the law*; and by aſſuming human nature, he became naturally ſubject to the laws and conditions of his being.

And here likewiſe is a proviſion made for the expiation and forgiveneſs of our ſins, in a way not only very honourable to the juſtice of God, and the authority of his laws, but likewiſe very effectual to diſcountenance ſin, and to deter men from it; ſince God did not think fit

fit to forgive the ſins of men without great ſufferings, and that in our nature. For though God was willing to ſave the ſinner, yet rather than encouragement ſhould be given to ſin, by letting it go unpuniſhed, he was contented to give up the *dearly beloved of his ſoul* to be *a ſacrifice and propitiation for the ſins of the whole world.*

By the ſame means alſo we have a moſt powerful antidote againſt the fear of ſuffering, and particularly againſt the fear of death, one of the greateſt ſlaveries of human nature. So alſo the Apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us, chap. ii. 14. 15. that for this cauſe Chriſt *himſelf alſo took part of fleſh and blood, that through death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage.*

Again, we have hereby full aſſurance of a bleſſed immortality in another life, becauſe in our nature death and all the powers of darkneſs were baffled and overcome. The death of Chriſt, which could not have been without his incarnation, and ſo likewiſe his reſurrection from the dead, and his aſcenſion into heaven, are ſenſible demonſtrations to all mankind of a bleſſed immortality after death; which is the moſt powerful motive in the world to obedience and a holy life.

And, laſtly, we may upon this account promiſe to ourſelves a fair and equal trial at the judgment of the great day, becauſe we ſhall then be judged by a man like ourſelves. Our Saviour and judge himſelf hath told us, that for this reaſon *God hath committed all judgment to the Son, becauſe he is the Son of man,* John v. 22. 27. And this in human judgments is accounted a great privilege, to be judged by thoſe who are of the ſame rank and condition with ourſelves, and who are likely to underſtand beſt, and moſt carefully to examine and conſider all our circumſtances, and to tender our caſe as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we ſhall be acquitted or condemned by ſuch a judge, as, according to human meaſures, we ourſelves ſhould have choſen; by one in our own nature, who *was made in all things like unto us*, that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our judge, becauſe it would have

have made him a criminal like ourſelves. And therefore the Apoſtle offers this as a firm ground of aſſurance to us that *God will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, becauſe this judgment ſhall be adminiſtered by a man like ourſelves: *He hath* (ſaith he) *appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained*, &c.

I ſhall now only make a practical inference or two from what hath been delivered upon this argument, and ſo conclude this whole diſcourſe.

1. The ſerious conſideration of what hath been ſaid concerning the incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, ſhould effectually prevail with us to comply with the great end and deſign of the Son of God's becoming man, and *dwelling amongſt us*, and of his doing and ſuffering all thoſe things which are recorded of him in the hiſtory of his life and death written by the holy Evangeliſts; I ſay, the conſideration hereof ſhould perſuade us all to comply with the great deſign of all this, which is, the reformation of mankind, and the recovery of us out of that ſinful and miſerable eſtate into which we were fallen; becauſe the ſalvation which the Son of God hath purchaſed for us, and which he offers to us by the goſpel, is not to be accompliſhed and brought about any other way than by our forſaking our ſins, and reforming our lives. *The grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, and brings ſalvation*, will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by *teaching us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* God *ſent his Son* Jeſus *to bleſs us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities:* and unleſs this change be effectually wrought in us, we are utterly incapable of all the bleſſings of the goſpel of Chriſt. All that he hath done for us without us, will avail us nothing, unleſs we be inwardly transformed and *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*; unleſs we become new creatures; unleſs we make it the continual and ſincere endeavour of our lives to *keep the commandments of God.*

For the ſcripture is moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter, Heb. xii. 14. that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; 1 John iii. 3. that *every man that hath this*

hope

hope in him, that is, in Chriſt, to be ſaved by him, muſt *purify himſelf, even as he is pure*. We do not rightly and truly believe that *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*, if we be not alſo thoroughly convinced, that it is as neceſſary for us to leave our ſins, as to believe this moſt faithful and credible ſaying.

The obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour are indeed *accounted to us for righteouſneſs*, and will moſt certainly redound to our unſpeakable benefit and advantage, upon our performance of the condition which the goſpel doth require on our part, namely, that *every man that names the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity*: and the grace of God's Holy Spirit is ready to enable us to perform this condition, if we earneſtly aſk it, and do ſincerely co-operate with it: provided we do what we can on our part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we *receive the grace of God in vain*, and take no care to perform the condition, and do neglect to implore the grace and aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit to that purpoſe, we have none to blame but ourſelves; becauſe it is then wholly our own fault, if we fall ſhort of that happineſs which Chriſt hath purchaſed and promiſed to us upon ſuch eaſy and reaſonable conditions as the goſpel propoſeth.

But I no where find that God hath promiſed to force happineſs upon the negligent, and a reward upon *the wicked and ſlothful ſervant*. A gift may be given for nothing, but ſurely a reward does in the very nature of it always ſuppoſe ſome ſervice. None but *a righteous man* is capable of *a righteous man's reward*: and St. John hath ſufficiently cautioned us not to think ourſelves righteous, unleſs we be doers of righteouſneſs: *Little children*, (ſays he, 1 John iii. 7.), *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous*. This is ſo very plain a text, that if men were not either very eaſy to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themſelves, they could not poſſibly miſtake the meaning of it; and therefore I will repeat it once more: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous*.

2. The other inference which I would make from the precedent diſcourſe, is this, That with all poſſible thankfulneſs

fulneſs we ſhould acknowledge and adore the wonderful goodneſs and condeſcenſion of almighty God, in ſending his *only begotten Son* into the world in our nature to be *made fleſh*, and to *dwell amongſt us*, in order to our recovery and ſalvation: A method and diſpenſation, not only full of mercy and goodneſs, but of great condeſcenſion to our meanneſs, and of mighty virtue and efficacy for our redemption, and deliverance from the guilt and dominion of ſin; and upon all accounts every way ſo much for our benefit and advantage: ſo that well may we ſay, with St. Paul, *This is a faithful ſaying*, πιστὸς λόγος, *a credible word, and worthy of all acceptation*, (that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all poſſible joy and thankfulneſs), *that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.*

What an everlaſting fountain of the moſt invaluable bleſſings and benefits to mankind is the incarnation of the Son of God; his vouchſafing to aſſume our nature, and to reſide and converſe ſo long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* ſhould condeſcend to do all this for us? That the high and glorious Majeſty of heaven ſhould ſtoop down to the earth, and be contented to be clothed with miſery and mortality? that he ſhould ſubmit to ſo poor and low a condition, to ſuch dreadful and diſgraceful ſufferings for our ſakes? For what are we? vile and deſpicable creatures, guilty and unworthy offenders and apoſtates, enemies and rebels. Bleſſed God! how great is thy goodneſs? how infinite are thy tender mercies and compaſſions to mankind? that thou ſhouldſt regard us whilſt we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition, when we had *forgotten thee days without number*; and ſhouldſt take ſuch pity on us, when we ſhewed none to ourſelves; and whilſt we were thy declared and implacable enemies, ſhouldſt expreſs more kindneſs and good-will to us, than the beſt of men ever did to their beſt friends?

When we reflect ſeriouſly upon thoſe great things which God hath done in our behalf, and conſider that mighty ſalvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we poſſibly render? what acknowledgments ſhall we ever be able to make, I do not ſay equal, but

in any ways meet and becoming, to this great benefactor of mankind; who when we had so highly offended and provoked him, and so foolishly and so fatally undone ourselves; when we were become so guilty and so miserable, and so much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation, than of his pity and compassion, was pleased to send his own, his only Son into the world to *seek and save us*; and by him to repair all our ruins, to *forgive all our iniquities*, to *heal all our* spiritual *diseases*, *and to crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies?*

And what sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving should we also offer up to this gracious and most merciful Redeemer of ours, the everlasting Son of the Father, who debased himself so infinitely for our sakes, and when he took upon him to deliver man did not abhor the virgin's womb; who was contented to be born so obscurely, and to live all his life in a poor and persecuted condition; and was pleased both to undergo and to overcome the sharpness of death, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers?

Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his holy table, and receiving the blessed symbols and pledges of his precious death and passion; how should *our hearts burn within us*, and leap for joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our spirits, and put us into an ecstasy of love and gratitude to this great friend and lover of souls? and, with the blessed mother of our Lord, how should *our souls*, upon that blessed occasion, *magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour?*

The holy men of old were transported with joy at the obscure and confused apprehension and remote foresight of so great a blessing, at so great a distance. It is said of Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, that *he saw his day afar off, and was glad.* How should we then be affected with joy and thankfulness, to whom the Son of God and blessed Saviour of men is actually come? He is come many ages ago, and hath enlightened a great part of the world with his glory. Yea, he is come to us, who were in a manner separated from the rest of the

world.

world. To us is this great light come, who had ſo long *ſat in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death*; and this mighty ſalvation which he hath wrought for us, is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon thoſe gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offered to us in his holy goſpel.

And by his coming he hath delivered mankind from that groſs ignorance and *thick darkneſs which covered the nations. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an underſtanding to know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt. This is the true God and eternal life,* 1 John v. 20. 21.; and then it immediately follows, *Little children, keep yourſelves from idols.* What can be the meaning of this caution? and what is the connexion of it with the foregoing diſcourſe? It is plainly this, That the Son of God, by his coming, had reſcued mankind from the ſottiſh worſhip of idols; and therefore he cautions Chriſtians to take great heed of relapſing into idolatry by worſhiping a creature, or the image and likeneſs of any creature, inſtead of God. And becauſe he foreſaw that it might be objected to Chriſtians, as in fact it was afterwards by the Heathen, that the worſhip of Chriſt, who was a man, was as much idolatry as that which the Chriſtians charged the Heathen withal; therefore St. John, effectually to prevent the force of this plauſible objection, though he perpetually, throughout his goſpel, declares Chriſt to be really a man, yet he expreſsly alſo affirms him to be God, and *the true God*; and conſequently, Chriſtians might ſafely pay divine worſhip to him without fear or danger of idolatry: *We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourſelves from idols.*

But this I am ſenſible is a digreſſion, yet ſuch a one as may not be altogether uſeleſs.

To proceed then in the recital of thoſe great bleſſings which the coming of the Son of God hath brought to mankind: He hath reſcued us from the bondage of ſin, and from the ſlavery of Satan: he hath openly proclaimed pardon and reconciliation to the world: he hath clearly revealed eternal life to us, which was but obſcure-

ly made known before, both to Jews and Gentiles; *but is now made manifeſt by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.* He hath purchaſed this great bleſſing for us, and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our ſins, and to be ſaved by him: a condition, without which as ſalvation is not to be had, ſo if it were, it would not be deſirable, it could not make us happy; becauſe our ſins would ſtill ſeparate between God and us, and the guilt and horror of our own minds would make us eternally miſerable.

And now, ſurely, we cannot but thus judge, that all the praiſes and acknowledgments, all the ſervice and obedience which we can poſſibly render to him, are infinitely beneath thoſe infinite obligations which the Son of God hath laid upon the ſons of men by his *coming into the world to ſave ſinners.*

What then remains, but that at all times, and more eſpecially at this ſeaſon, we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing goodneſs of God to us, in the incarnation of his Son for the redemption and ſalvation of the ſinful and miſerable race of mankind? A method and diſpenſation of the divine grace and wiſdom, not only full of mercy and condeſcenſion, but of great power and virtue to purify our hearts and to reform our lives; to beget in us a fervent love of God our Saviour, and a perfect hatred and deteſtation of our ſins, and a ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life: in a word, a method that is every way calculated for our unſpeakable benefit and comfort.

Since then the Son of God hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be *made in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*, let us aſpire to be as like to him as is poſſible in the exemplary holineſs and virtues of his life. We cannot be like him in his miracles, but we may in his mercy and compaſſion: we cannot imitate his divine power, but we may reſemble him in his innocency and humility, in his meekneſs and patience. And as he aſſumed human nature, ſo let us reaſſume humanity, which

we

we have in great meaſure depraved and put off; and let us *put on bowels of mercy* towards thoſe that are in miſery, and be ready to relieve the poor for his ſake, *who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

To conclude: Let us imitate him in that which was his great work and buſineſs here upon earth, and which of all other did beſt become the Son of God; I mean, in his *going about doing good*, that, by *giving glory to God in the higheſt*, and by endeavouring, as much as in us lies, to procure and promote *peace on earth, and good-will amongſt men*, we may at laſt be *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light*, through the mercies and merits of our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

" Almighty God, who haſt given us thy only begot-
" ten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this
" time to be born of a pure virgin, grant, that we being
" regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and
" grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit,
" through the ſame our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who liveth
" and reigneth with thee and the ſame Spirit, ever one
" God, world without end. *Amen.*"

SERMON XLVII.

Concerning the ſacrifice and ſatisfaction of Chriſt, &c.

HEB. ix. 26.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.

AMong many other great ends and reaſons for which God was pleaſed to ſend his Son into the world to dwell amongſt us, this was one of the chief, that, by a long courſe of the greateſt innocency and the greateſt ſufferings in our nature, he might be capable to

make a perfect expiation of ſin: *But now once in the end of the world,* ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, *in the concluſion of the ages,* (that is, in the laſt age of the world, which is the goſpel-age), *hath he appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.*

The general deſign of God in ſending his Son into the world, was, to ſave mankind from eternal death and miſery, and to purchaſe for us eternal life and happineſs. So the author of our ſalvation himſelf tells us, John iii. 16. that *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

Now, in order to the procuring of this ſalvation for us, the impediments and hinderances of it were to be removed. Theſe were, the guilt, and the dominion of ſin. By the guilt of ſin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of God, and to eternal condemnation; and by the defilement and dominion of it we were incapable of the happineſs of heaven, and the reward of eternal life.

To remove theſe two great hinderances, two things were neceſſary; the forgiveneſs of ſins paſt, in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God, and the eternal torments of the next life; and the reformation of our hearts and lives, to make us capable of eternal life and happineſs in another world. And both theſe, if God had ſo pleaſed, might, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and diſpenſation of ſending his Son in our nature *to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* But it ſeems the wiſdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our ſalvation; and no doubt for very good reaſons; amongſt which theſe three ſeem to be very obvious, and very conſiderable.

1. To vindicate the honour of his laws, which, if ſin had gone altogether unpuniſhed, would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general pardon of ſin to all mankind, without any teſtimony of his wrath and diſpleaſure againſt it, who would have had any great veneration for his laws, or have believed in good earneſt, that the violation

lation of them had either been so extremely offensive to him, or so very dangerous to the sinner?

Therefore, to maintain the honour of his laws, rather than sin should pass unpunished, God would lay the punishment of it upon his only begotten Son, the dearest person to him in the world; which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his laws, than if the sinner had suffered the punishment due to it in his own person.

2. Another reason of this dispensation, and that likewise very considerable, was, that God might forgive sin in such a way as yet effectually to discountenance and discourage it, and to create in us the greatest horror and hatred of it; which could not have been by an absolute pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his justice. For had sin been so easily forgiven, who would have been sensible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when God makes his own Son a sacrifice, and lays upon him the punishment due for the iniquities of us all, this is a demonstration, that God hates sin as much, if it be possible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly shews what sin deserves, and what the sinner may justly expect, if, after this severity of God against it, he will venture to commit it.

And if this sacrifice for sin, and the pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it; if we sin wilfully after so clear a revelation of *the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.* For what could God do more to testify his displeasure against sin, and to discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son *an offering for sin*, and to give him up to be *wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*? In what clearer glass can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our sins and for our sakes?

3. Another

3. Another reaſon of this diſpenſation ſeems to have been a gracious condeſcenſion and compliance of almighty God with a certain apprehenſion and perſuaſion, which had very early and univerſally obtained among mankind, concerning the expiation of ſin, and appeaſing the offended Deity, by the ſacrifices of living creatures, of birds and beaſts; and afterwards by human ſacrifices, and the blood of their ſons and daughters; by offering to God, as the expreſſion is in the Prophet, *their firſt-born for their tranſgreſſion, and the fruit of their body for the ſin of their ſouls.*

And this notion of the expiation of ſin by ſacrifice, whether it had its firſt riſe from divine revelation, and was afterwards propagated from age to age by tradition; I ſay, from whence ſoever this notion came, it hath, of all other notions concerning religion, excepting thoſe of the being of God and his providence, and of the recompences of another life, found the moſt univerſal reception; and the thing hath been the moſt generally practiſed in all ages and nations, not only in the old, but in the new diſcovered parts of the world.

And indeed a very great part of the Jewiſh religion, which was inſtituted by God himſelf, ſeems to have been a plain condeſcenſion to the general apprehenſion of mankind, concerning this way of appeaſing the offended Deity by ſacrifices; as it was alſo a figure of that great and efficacious ſacrifice which ſhould in due time be offered to God to make atonement once for all for the ſins of all mankind.

And the Apoſtle to the Hebrews doth very particularly inſiſt upon this condeſcenſion of God to them in the diſpenſation of the goſpel. And whereas they apprehended ſo great a neceſſity of an High Prieſt, and of ſacrifices, to make expiation for the ſins of the people, that it was an eſtabliſhed principle among them, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion of ſins*, God was pleaſed to comply ſo far with theſe notions and apprehenſions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a prieſt and a ſacrifice, to do that once for all which their own High Prieſt pretended to do year by year.

And from hence the ſame Apoſtle takes occaſion to recommend to them the new covenant, and diſpenſation of the

the goſpel, as having a greater and more perfect High Prieſt, and a more excellent ſacrifice, than were the High Prieſts and the ſacrifices under the law; the Son of God *having by one ſacrifice of himſelf obtained eternal redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.*

And this apprehenſion prevailed no leſs in the Heathen world, and proceeded to the ſacrifices of men, even of their firſt-born. And with this apprehenſion, not to countenance, but to aboliſh it, God was pleaſed to comply ſo far, as to make a general atonement for the ſins of mankind by the death of his Son, appearing in our nature to become a voluntary ſacrifice for us: God permitting him to be unjuſtly put to death, and his blood to be ſhed by the malice of men, in appearance as a malefactor, but in truth as a martyr; and accepting of his death as a meritorious ſacrifice and *propitiation for the ſins of the whole world*; that by this wiſe counſel and permiſſion of his providence he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhumane way of ſerving God which had been ſo long in uſe and practice among them: the Son of God by the voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf having effected all that at once, and for ever, which mankind, from the beginning of the world, had in vain been endeavouring to accompliſh by innumerable and continual ſacrifices; namely, the pardon of their ſins, and perfect peace and reconciliation with God.

For theſe ends and reaſons, and perhaps for many more as great and conſiderable as theſe, which our ſhallow underſtandings are not able to fathom, the wiſdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering mankind from the guilt and dominion of ſin by the ſacrifice of his Son. And to this end it was requiſite, that he ſhould appear in our nature, and dwell amongſt us for ſome conſiderable time, that, by a long courſe of the greateſt innocency, and of the greateſt ſufferings in our nature, he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of ſin.

So that two things were requiſite to qualify him for this purpoſe; perfect innocency and obedience, and great ſufferings in our nature, even to the ſuffering of death. Both theſe the ſcripture declares to be neceſſary qualifications of a perſon capable to make expiation of ſin; and

both

both theſe were found in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour.

1. Unſpotted innocency and perfect obedience. This the ſcripture teſtifies concerning him, and the whole courſe of his life and actions: *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. iv. 15. *He always did the things which pleaſed God*, as he teſtifies concerning himſelf, John viii. 29; *and we are ſure that his witneſs is true. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, as St. Peter tells us of him, 1 Pet. ii. 22. And this was neceſſary to qualify him for the perfect expiation of ſin, whether we conſider him as a prieſt, or as a ſacrifice.

As a prieſt, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the ſins of others, had he not been without ſin himſelf. And this the Apoſtle tells us, is one great advantage of our High Prieſt under the goſpel, above the High Prieſt under the law, who, being a ſinner himſelf, as well as thoſe for whom he offered, had need to offer for himſelf, before he could make ſo much as a legal expiation for the ſins of others. But a perfect and effectual expiation of ſin, ſo as to purge the conſcience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High Prieſt who is holy and innocent himſelf: *For ſuch an high prieſt* (ſaith the Apoſtle, Heb. vii. 26. 27.) *became us*, (that is, now under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, when a perfect expiation of ſins is to be made, *ſuch an high prieſt* is neceſſary), *who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners; who needeth not, as thoſe high prieſts*, (that is, as the High Prieſts under the law), *to offer up ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people's*. The plain force of which argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the ſins of others, muſt be without ſin himſelf.

And then, if we conſider Chriſt as a ſacrifice for ſin, perfect holineſs is neceſſary to make a ſacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of ſin. The neceſſity of this was typified by the quality of the expiatory ſacrifices under the law. The beaſts that were to be offered, were to be *without ſpot and blemiſh*. To which the Apoſtle alludes, ſpeaking of the quality and efficacy of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, Heb. ix. 14. *How much more* (ſays he) *ſhall the blood*

blood of Chriſt, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God? And to the ſame purpoſe St. Peter, 1 epiſt. i. 18. 19. *Foraſmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold; but with the precious blood of Chriſt, as of a lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot,* &c.; hereby intimating, that nothing leſs than the perfect innocency and holineſs of him who was to be a ſacrifice for us, could have expiated the guilt of our ſins, and purchaſed eternal redemption for us.

2. Great ſufferings likewiſe in our nature, even to the ſuffering of death, were requiſite to the perfect expiation of ſin: I ſay, even to the ſuffering of death; for the ſacrifices which were to make expiation, were to be ſlain. And it was a conſtant maxim and principle among the Jews, and the Apoſtle more than once in this epiſtle ſeems to allow and confirm it, That *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins.*

Not that God could not have pardoned ſin without ſatisfaction made to his juſtice, either by the ſuffering of the ſinner himſelf, or of a ſacrifice in his ſtead: but, according to the method and diſpenſation which the wiſdom of God had pitched upon, he was reſolved not to diſpenſe forgiveneſs in any other way. For which reaſon he ſeems either to have poſſeſſed mankind with this principle, or to have permitted them to be ſo perſuaded, That ſin was not to be expiated but by blood; that is, either by the death of the ſinner, or of the ſacrifice.

Now, the life of our bleſſed Saviour, as well as his death, was made up of ſufferings of one kind or other; continual ſufferings from his cradle to his croſs, from the time he drew his firſt breath to his giving up the ghoſt: and not only continual ſufferings, but the greateſt that ever were; conſidering the dignity of the perſon that ſuffered, and the nature of the ſufferings; conſidering likewiſe that theſe ſufferings were not only wholly undeſerved on his part, but unmerited alſo on ours, for whoſe ſake he ſubmitted himſelf to them: nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmoſt thoſe for whom and by whom he ſuffered, and continued ſtill to oblige them, by the greateſt bleſſings and benefits purchaſed

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and procured for them by thoſe very ſufferings which with ſo much malice and cruelty they inflicted on him.

Had our bleſſed Saviour been a mere man, the perfect innocency and unſpotted purity of his whole life; his zeal to do the will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good;* his conſtant obedience to God in the moſt difficult inſtances; and his perſeverance in well-doing, notwithſtanding the ill uſage and hard meaſure, the bitter reproaches and perſecutions he met withal for it from a wicked and ill-natured world; his perfect ſubmiſſion to the will of God; his invincible patience under the greateſt and bittereſt ſufferings, and his infinite charity to his enemies and perſecutors: theſe muſt needs be highly acceptable to God, and, if man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the ſins of others.

But our Saviour and our ſacrifice being the Son of God in our nature; and he voluntarily aſſuming it, and ſubmitting to the condition of humanity in its loweſt and moſt miſerable ſtate, ſin only excepted; and his being contented to live a life of doing good and ſuffering evil, and at laſt to be put to death, and ſlain a ſacrifice for us: the dignity of the perſon who did and ſuffered all this for us, and his dearneſs to God, muſt needs add a mighty value to ſo perfect an obedience, and ſuch patient ſufferings, ſo as to render them a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world.

And all this being willingly performed in our nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reaſonably be preſumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we ourſelves had performed it in our own perſons; nothing being ſo proper and ſo available to make an honourable amends and ſatisfaction to the juſtice of God for the ſins of all mankind, as the voluntary obedience and ſufferings of human nature in a perſon of ſo great dignity, and dearneſs to God, as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now, that expiation of ſin was made by the ſufferings of Chriſt in our ſtead, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe three ways.

1. From plain teſtimonies of holy ſcripture, declaring this

this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it.

2. From the nature and intention of expiatory ſacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Chriſt is in the New Teſtament ſo frequently compared; and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away ſin, infinitely preferred to it.

3. By vindicating this method and diſpenſation of the divine wiſdom from the objections which are brought againſt it; and by ſhewing, that there is nothing in it that is unreaſonable, or any ways unworthy of God.

I. I ſhall produce ſome plain teſtimonies of holy ſcripture, which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it, namely, that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of ſin, ſuffered in our ſtead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect atonement for ſin, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

This the ſcripture declares to us in great variety of expreſſions; as, that *Chriſt died for us*, and *for our ſins*: that he was *a ſacrifice for us*, and *a propitiation for the ſins of the whole world*; that is, of all mankind: that *he bare our ſins in his own body on the tree*, and *appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*: that *we are juſtified by his blood*, and *redeemed by the price of it*. And in very many other expreſſions to the ſame purpoſe.

And this is ſo evidently the ſcope and meaning of theſe expreſſions, that it cannot be denied, without offering the greateſt violence imaginable to the holy ſcriptures. For can any man think that God would have uſed ſo many expreſſions in ſcripture, the plain and moſt obvious ſenſe of all which is, that the Son of God ſuffered for our ſins and in our ſtead, if this had not been his deſign and meaning? Would not this be in effect to ſay, that God had written a great book to puzzle and confound, but not to inſtruct and teach mankind?

I will at preſent ſingle out ſome few of thoſe many texts of ſcripture which might be produced to this purpoſe: 2 Cor. v. 21. *He hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin*; that is, he hath made him, who had no ſin himſelf, a ſacrifice for our ſins. Again, Eph. v. 2. *And walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and hath given*

himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacrifice to God. St. Peter to the ſame purpoſe tells us, that *Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the fleſh,* 1 Pet. iii. 18. Here Chriſt is ſaid to have *ſuffered for ſin:* and to declare, that the Apoſtle did not only mean that Chriſt ſuffered upon the occaſion of our ſins, but that he ſuffered in the place and ſtead of the ſinner, he adds, *the juſt for the unjuſt;* that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no ſin, ſuffered for us who were ſinners; or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed, *he bare our ſins in his own body on the tree.*

It is true indeed, that Chriſt ſuffered for our benefit and advantage; which the Socinians would have to be all that is meant in the texts which I have cited: but then it ought to be conſidered, that Chriſt's ſuffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any ways inconſiſtent with his ſuffering in our ſtead. For whoever ſuffers in another man's ſtead, and to ſave him from ſuffering, does undoubtedly ſuffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the beſt demonſtration of it that can be. But the manner of the expreſſion, if compared with other parallel texts of ſcripture, and eſpecially with what is ſo often ſaid of our Saviour's being a ſacrifice, which I ſhall have occaſion further to urge by and by; I ſay, the manner of the expreſſion, if well conſidered, will appear to any man that is not contentious, to ſignify our Saviour's ſuffering inſtead of the ſinner.

But, not to argue from words and phraſes, I will produce two texts which declare this matter ſo plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided, without the moſt ſhameful wreſting and perverting of them. John xv. 12. *This is my commandment,* (ſays our Saviour), *That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* How is that? he declares in the next words, ℣ 13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend;* that is, that he be contented to die in his ſtead. And to the ſame purpoſe St. Paul, Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet ſinners, in due time Chriſt died for the ungodly.* Now, the queſtion is, Whether, by this expreſſion of Chriſt's dying for the ungodly, be meant only his dying for

for the benefit and advantage of ſinners, but not his dying in their ſtead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: ℣ 7. 8. *For ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man ſome would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us.* And now I appeal to any man of good ſenſe, whether it be not plain, that the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of Chriſt's dying for ſinners in the ſame ſenſe as one man is ſaid to die for another; that is, to ſave another from death; which, what is it elſe but to die in his ſtead? He that can deny this, is perverſe to the higheſt degree, and I fear almoſt beyond the poſſibility of being convinced.

And the argument from theſe two texts is ſo much the ſtronger, becauſe we do not here reaſon merely from the phraſe and expreſſion, but from the main ſcope of our Saviour's diſcourſe in the one, and of St. Paul's in the other: for the deſign of both is, to recommend the ſuperlative love of Chriſt to us above the greateſt love that ever any man expreſſed to another. The higheſt pitch that human affection did ever riſe to, was for a man to lay down his life for his friend; but the Son of God laid down his life for his enemies. *Scarcely* (ſays St. Paul) *would one lay down his life for a righteous man;* that is, for one who is but ſtrictly juſt and honeſt, and does no body wrong; but for a good man, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged mankind by great benefits, ſome one may be found that would lay down his life to ſave the life of ſuch a perſon: but the love of Chriſt hath gone far beyond this; he died for ſinners, for thoſe who were neither good men nor righteous: *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us.* Now, where doth the force of this argument lie, if not in this, that Chriſt hath done that for us, who were enemies and ſinners, which ſome very few perſons in the world have done for their friend, or for ſome very eminently good man? And what is that? why they have laid down their lives in their ſtead. And ſo Chriſt hath done for us. This ſeems to be ſo very plain, that I do not ſee how the force of this argument is poſſible to be avoided.

It is evident then from ſcripture, that Chriſt died, not only for our advantage, but in our ſtead; as truly and really as any man ever did or can die for another, who lays down his own life to ſave another from death. For if Chriſt had not died, we had periſhed everlaſtingly; and becauſe he died, we are ſaved from eternal death and miſery.

And though this be no where in ſcripture ſpoken of by the name or term of *ſatisfaction*, yet it is ſaid to be the price of our redemption; which ſurely is the ſame in effect with ſatisfaction. For as we are ſinners, we are liable, and, as I may ſay, indebted to the juſtice of God; and the Son of God, by his death and ſufferings in our nature, hath diſcharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us. Which diſcharge, ſince it was obtained for us by the ſhedding of Chriſt's blood, and the ſcripture tells us, that *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins*; and ſince God is graciouſly pleaſed to accept of it for the debt which we owed to his juſtice, and to declare himſelf fully pleaſed and contented with it; why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *ſatisfaction*, I confeſs I am not able to underſtand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing; but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in ſerious matters, what barretry in divinity is this?

Not that God was angry with his Son when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: no; he was always well pleaſed with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs*, and *bore our ſins in his own body on the tree*.

Nor yet that our Saviour ſuffered the very ſame that the ſinner ſhould have ſuffered, namely, the proper pains and torment of the damned: but that his obedience and ſufferings were of that value and eſteem with God, and his voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf ſo well-pleaſing to him, that he thereupon entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he hath engaged himſelf to forgive the ſins of thoſe who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the blood of Chriſt, which was ſhed for us upon the croſs, is called *the blood of the covenant*, as being the ſanction of that new covenant into which God is entered with mankind;

kind; and not only the ſanction and confirmation of that covenant, but the very foundation of it: for which reaſon the cup in the Lord's ſupper is called *the new teſtament* (or, as the word ſhould rather be rendered, *the new covenant*) *in his blood, which was ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins.* I proceed now to the

II. Second thing propounded; which was, to ſhew, that the expiation of our ſins was made by the ſufferings of Chriſt, from the nature and intention of expiatory ſacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Chriſt is in the New Teſtament ſo frequently compared, and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away ſin, infinitely preferred to it.

Now, the nature and deſign of expiatory ſacrifices was plainly this, to ſubſtitute one living creature to ſuffer and die inſtead of another; ſo that what the ſinner deſerved to have ſuffered, was ſuppoſed to be done to the ſacrifice; that is, it was ſlain to make an atonement for the ſinner.

And though there was no reaſon to hope for any ſuch effect from the blood of bulls, or goats, or of any other living creatures that were wont to be offered up in ſacrifice; yet that both Jews and Heathens did expect and hope for it, is ſo very evident, that it cannot, without extreme ignorance or obſtinacy, be denied.

But this expectation, how unreaſonable ſoever, plainly ſhews it to have been the common apprehenſion of mankind in all ages, that God would not be appeaſed, nor ſhould ſin be pardoned, without ſuffering: but yet ſo, that men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the repentance of ſinners, God would accept of a vicarious puniſhment; that is, of the ſuffering of ſome other in their ſtead. And very probably, as I ſaid before, in compliance with this apprehenſion of mankind, and in condeſcenſion to it, as well as for other weighty reaſons beſt known to the divine wiſdom, God was pleaſed to find out ſuch a ſacrifice as ſhould really and effectually procure for them that great bleſſing of the forgiveneſs of ſins which they had ſo long hoped for from the multitude of their own ſacrifices.

And the Apoſtle to the Hebrews doth, in a large diſcourſe, ſhew the great virtue and efficacy of the ſacrifice

of Chriſt, to the purpoſe of remiſſion of ſins, above that of the ſacrifices under the law; and that the death of Chriſt is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the ſacrifices under the law were ſuppoſed to be to the ſinner: *But now once* (ſaith the Apoſtle here in the text) *in the end of the world, hath he appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* This is the great virtue and efficacy of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, that whatever was expected from any other ſacrifices, either by Jews or Heathens, was really effected by this.

This was plainly ſignified by the Jewiſh paſſover, wherein the lamb was ſlain, and the ſinner did eſcape, and was paſſed by. In alluſion whereto St. Paul makes no ſcruple to call Chriſt *our paſſover* or *paſchal lamb*, who was ſlain that we might eſcape: *Chriſt our paſſover* (ſays he, 1 Cor. v. 7.) *is ſlain*, or offered *for us*; that is, he, by the gracious appointment of God, was ſubſtituted to ſuffer all that in our ſtead which the paſchal lamb was ſuppoſed to ſuffer for the ſinner.

And this was likewiſe ſignified by the ſinner's laying his hand upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain, thereby, as it were, transferring the puniſhment which was due to himſelf upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain and offered up. For ſo God tells Moſes, that the ſinner, who came to offer an expiatory ſacrifice, ſhould do, Lev. i. 4. *He ſhall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it ſhall be accepted for him to make an atonement for him.* And the Apoſtle tells us, that it was an eſtabliſhed principle in the Jewiſh religion, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion of ſins.* Which plainly ſhews, that they expected this benefit of the remiſſion of ſins from the blood of their ſacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this benefit by the blood of Chriſt, and by the virtue of his ſacrifice. And again, *Chriſt* (ſays he, Heb. ix. 28.) *was once offered to bear the ſins of many*; plainly alluding to the ſacrifices under the law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the ſinner.

And that this expreſſion of *Chriſt's being offered to bear our ſins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our ſins by his holy doctrine which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our ſins by way of imputation, and

and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the sacrifice was supposed to do for the sinner: this, I say, is evident beyond all denial, from the opposition which follows after the text between his first appearance and his second: *Christ* (says our Apostle, ℣ 28.) *was once offered to bear our sins; but unto them that look for him he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.* Why? did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes, certainly, as to any inherent guilt: for the scripture tells us, *he had no sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, that at his first coming *he bore our sins*, but at his second coming *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation?* These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his first coming he sustained the person of a sinner, and suffered instead of us; but his second coming shall be upon another account, and *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation;* that is, not as a sacrifice, but as a judge, to confer the reward of eternal life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that sacrifice which he offered to God for us *in the days of his flesh.* I proceed to the

III. Third thing I proposed, and which yet remains to be spoken to, namely, to vindicate this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom from the objections which are brought against it; and to shew, that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any ways unworthy of God. I shall mention four objections which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable.

1. That this method, of the expiation of sin by the sufferings of Christ, seems to argue some defect and want of goodness in God, as if he needed some external motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive sinners. To which I think the answer is not difficult, namely, That God did not want goodness to have forgiven sin freely and without any satisfaction; but his wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to sin by too easy a forgiveness, and without some remarkable testimony of his severe displeasure against it: and therefore his greater goodness and compassion to mankind devised this way to save the sinner, without giving the least countenance and encouragement to sin.

For

For God to think of ſaving us any way, was exceſſive goodneſs and mercy; but to think of doing it in this way, by ſubſtituting his dearly beloved Son to ſuffer in our ſtead, is a condeſcenſion ſo very amazing, that if God had not been pleaſed of his own goodneſs to ſtoop to it, it had almoſt been blaſphemy in man to have thought of it, or deſired it.

2. How can our ſins be ſaid to have been forgiven freely, if the pardon of them was purchaſed at ſo dear a rate, and ſo mighty a price was paid for it?

In anſwer to this, I deſire theſe two things may be conſidered. 1*ſt*, That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God to admit of this tranſlation of the puniſhment which was due to us, and to accept of the ſufferings of another in our ſtead, and for our benefit, when he might juſtly have exacted it of us in our own perſons: ſo that, even in this reſpect, we are, as St. Paul ſays, *juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt*: and freely too, in reſpect of any neceſſity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his goodneſs to ſave us, even by the ſatisfaction and ſufferings of his own Son. 2*dly*, It was in effect freely too, notwithſtanding the mighty price which was paid for our redemption: becauſe this price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; he *found out this ranſom for us*. And will any man ſay, that a prince who prevails with his ſon to interceed for the pardon of a rebel, yea and to ſuffer ſome puniſhment, or to pay a fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect, and in all equitable and grateful conſtruction, forgive him freely?

3. It is yet further objected, That this ſeems to be more unreaſonable than the ſacrificing of beaſts among the Jews, nay than the ſacrificing of men among the Heathen, and even of their own ſons and daughters; becauſe this is the offering up of the Son of God, the moſt innocent and the moſt excellent perſon that ever was.

To which I anſwer, That if we conſider the manner and the deſign of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherwiſe.

As to the manner of it, God did not command his Son

Son to be ſacrificed; but his providence permitted the wickedneſs and violence of men to put him to death: and then his goodneſs and wiſdom did over-rule this worſt of actions to the beſt of ends. And if we conſider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflexion upon the holy providence of God, than any enormities and cruelties which by his permiſſion are daily committed in the world?

And then, if we conſider the end and deſign of this permiſſion of Chriſt's death, and the application of it to the purpoſe of a general expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful deſign of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreaſonable and bloody way of worſhip, which had been ſo long practiſed in the world; and, after this one ſacrifice, which was ſo infinitely dear to God, the benefit of expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other ſacrifices being worthleſs and vain in compariſon of this: and it hath ever ſince obtained this effect, of making all other ſacrifices to ceaſe, in all parts of the world where Chriſtianity hath prevailed.

4. The laſt objection is, the injuſtice and cruelty of an innocent perſon's ſuffering inſtead of the offender.

To this I anſwer, That they who make ſo great a noiſe with this objection, do ſeem to me to give a full and clear anſwer to it themſelves, by acknowledging, as they conſtantly and expreſsly do; that our Saviour ſuffered all this for our benefit and advantage, though not in our place and ſtead. For this, to my apprehenſion, is plainly to give up the cauſe, unleſs they can ſhew a good reaſon why there is not as much injuſtice and cruelty in an innocent perſon's ſuffering for the benefit and advantage of a malefactor, as in his ſuffering in his ſtead. So little do men, in the heat of diſpute and oppoſition, who are reſolved to hold faſt an opinion in deſpite of reaſon and good ſenſe, conſider, that they do many times in effect, and by neceſſary conſequence, grant the very thing which in expreſs terms they do ſo ſtiffly and pertinaciouſly deny.

The truth of the matter is this: There is nothing of injuſtice or cruelty in either caſe, neither in an innocent

cent perſon's ſuffering for the benefit of an offender, nor in his ſtead, ſuppoſing the ſuffering to be voluntary; but they have equally the ſame appearance of injuſtice and cruelty. Nor can I poſſibly diſcern any reaſon why injuſtice and cruelty ſhould be objected in the one caſe more than in the other; there being every whit as little reaſon why an innocent perſon ſhould ſuffer for the benefit of a criminal, as why he ſhould ſuffer in his ſtead. So that I hope this objection, which above all the reſt hath been ſo loudly and ſo invidiouſly urged, hath received a juſt anſwer.

And I believe, if the matter were ſearched to the bottom, all this perverſe contention about our Saviour's ſuffering for our benefit, but not in our ſtead, will ſignify juſt nothing. For if Chriſt died for our benefit, ſo as ſome way or other, by virtue of his death and ſufferings, to ſave us from the wrath of God, and to procure our eſcape from eternal death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our ſtead: for he that dies with an intention to do that benefit to another as to ſave him from death, doth certainly, to all intents and purpoſes, die in his place and ſtead.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the controverſy is at an end; and both ſides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phraſe and manner of expreſſion; which is to ſeek a quarrel and an occaſion of difference where there is no real ground for it: a thing which ought to be very far from reaſonable and peaceable minds.

For the Socinians ſay, that our Saviour's voluntary obedience and ſufferings did procure his exaltation at the right hand of God, and power and authority to forgive ſins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleaſed. So that they grant that his obedience and ſufferings, in the meritorious conſequence of them, do redound to our benefit and advantage as much as we pretend and ſay they do; only they are loth in expreſs terms to acknowledge that Chriſt died in our ſtead: and this for no other reaſon, that I can imagine, but becauſe they have denied it ſo often and ſo long.

But I appeal to the ingenuity of our adverſaries, whether this do not in the laſt iſſue come all to one; and be not,

not, on their part, a mere controverſy about words? For ſuppoſe a malefactor condemned to ſome grievous puniſhment; and the King's ſon, to ſave him from it, is contented to ſubmit to great diſgrace and ſufferings: in reward of which ſufferings, the King takes his ſon into his throne, and ſets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this malefactor, and, upon a fitting ſubmiſſion and repentance, to advance him to honour. Will not any man in this caſe allow, that the King's ſon ſuffered inſtead of this malefactor; and ſmile at any man that ſhall be ſo nice, as to grant that indeed he ſuffered for him, but yet to deny that he was puniſhed for him; to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obſtinately to ſtand it out that the faults of this malefactor were not laid upon him, or in any ways ſo imputed to him, that he can be ſaid to have ſuffered in his ſtead? This is juſt the caſe; and the difference in reality, and in the laſt reſult of things, is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious argument, in which I take no pleaſure; but yet ſhall be glad, if I may be ſo happy as, by any thing that hath been ſaid, to contribute towards the putting an end to ſo unhappy a controverſy, which hath troubled the world ſo long, and raiſed ſuch a duſt, that very few have been able to ſee clearly through it.

However, I cannot diſmiſs this argument without making ſome uſeful, but very ſhort reflexion upon this great doctrine of our religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a ſacrifice for us, and expoſed to ſuch bitter ſufferings, and ſo cruel a death, for the expiation of our ſins, ſhould create in us the greateſt dread and deteſtation of ſin, and for ever deter us from all wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience. For if the guilt of our ſins was done away upon ſuch hard terms, and coſt the dearly beloved Son of God ſo much ſweat and blood, then ſurely we ought to take great heed, how by our renewed provocations we renew his paſſion, and do what in us lies to *crucify to ourſelves the Son of God afreſh, and to put him to an open ſhame.*

If God did ſo terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his ſoul for our ſakes; if the Son of God was ſo grievouſly

wounded

wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and ſo ſorely *bruiſed for our iniquities*; if ſo fearful a ſtorm of vengeance fell upon the moſt innocent perſon that ever was for our ſins, then we have reaſon to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to ſinners, to *ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing*, if it be poſſible, *come upon* ourſelves.

In this diſpenſation of God's grace and mercy to mankind, by the death of his Son, God ſeems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almoſt further than goodneſs and juſtice will well admit, to afflict innocency itſelf, to ſave the guilty. And if herein God hath expreſſed his hatred of ſin in ſuch a wonderful way of love and kindneſs to the ſons of men, as looks almoſt like hatred of innocency, and his own Son; this ought, in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curſe for us*, and *loved us* to that degree, as to *waſh us from our ſins in his own blood*; I ſay, this ought to beget in us a greater diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and a more perfect deteſtation of it, than if we had ſuffered the puniſhment due to it in our own perſons: for in this caſe we could only have been diſpleaſed at ourſelves, and our ſins, as the juſt cauſe of our ſufferings; but in the other we ought to hate ſin as the unhappy occaſion of the ſaddeſt misfortune and ſoreſt calamities to the beſt man that ever was, and to our beſt friend, for our ſins, and for our ſakes.

Since then the Son of God hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be *made in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*; let us aſpire as much as is poſſible to become like to him. Above all, let us hate and avoid ſin, as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to ſuffer ſuch bitter things to ſave us from the defilement and dominion of it, from the puniſhment and all the diſmal conſequences of it.

He had no ſin: but God was pleaſed to *lay upon him the iniquities of us all*, and *to make his ſoul an offering for ſin*, and to permit all that to be done to him which was due to us. He was contented to be ſacrificed once for all mankind, that men might for ever ceaſe from that inhumane and ineffectual way of ſacrificing one another; whereby, inſtead of expiating their guilt, they did inflame

flame it, and by thinking to make atonement for their ſins, they did in truth add to the number and heinouſneſs of them.

And let us likewiſe learn from this admirable pattern, to pity thoſe that are in miſery, as Chriſt alſo hath pitied us; and to *ſave them that are ready to periſh*, for his ſake who *came to ſeek and to ſave us that were loſt*.

Let us, upon all occaſions, be ready to open our bowels of compaſſion towards the poor; in a thankful imitation of his grace and goodneſs, who for our ſakes choſe to be a beggar, that we for his ſake might not deſpiſe the poor, but might have a tender regard and compaſſion to thoſe whoſe condition in this world does ſo nearly reſemble that in which the Son of God thought it fitteſt for him to appear when he was pleaſed to become man.

In a word, let us, in the whole courſe, and in all the actions of our lives, *ſhew forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*; and *hath raiſed up a mighty ſalvation for us*, that, *being delivered from all our* ſpiritual *enemies*, from ſin, and all the powers of darkneſs, *we might ſerve him* who hath *ſaved us*; *walking in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him, all the days of our lives*.

Now, *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain: to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the firſt begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth: unto him who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood*; and, whilſt we were enemies to him, loved us at ſuch a rate, as never any man did his friend: to him who became man, that he might bring us to God; and aſſumed our frail and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with immortality and life: to him who was pleaſed to dwell and live amongſt us, that he might teach us how to live: to him *who died for our ſins, and roſe again for our juſtification, and lives for ever to make interceſſion for us*: to him be glory and dominion, thankſgiving and praiſe, to eternal ages. *Amen*.

SERMON XLVIII.

Concerning the unity of the divine nature, and the bleſſed Trinity, &c.

1 TIM. ii. 5.

For there is one God.

THE particle *for* leads us to the conſideration of the context, and occaſion of theſe words; which in ſhort is this. The deſign of this epiſtle is, to direct Timothy, to whom St. Paul had committed the government of the church of Epheſus, how he ought to demean himſelf in that great and weighty charge. And, at the beginning of this chapter, he gives direction concerning publick prayers in the church; that *prayers and thankſgivings be made for all men*, and for all ranks and orders of men; eſpecially for *kings, and all that are in authority, that under them* Chriſtians *might lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty*.

And this he tells us was very ſuitable to the Chriſtian religion, by which God deſigned the ſalvation of mankind; and therefore it muſt needs be very acceptable to him, that we ſhould offer up prayers and thankſgivings to him in behalf of all men: *For this* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*.

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a ranſom for all:* as if he had ſaid, This univerſal charity of Chriſtians, in *praying for all men*, muſt needs be very acceptable to him to whom we put up our prayers, God the Father, who ſent his Son for the ſalvation of all men; and to him likewiſe by whom we offer up our prayers to God, and is amongſt us Chriſtians the only *Mediator between God and men*, in virtue of that price and ranſom which he paid for

for the redemption of all mankind: I ſay, for this reaſon, it muſt needs be very acceptable to him, that we ſhould pray for all men, becauſe he died for all men; and now that he is in heaven at the right hand of God, interceeds with him for the ſalvation of thoſe for whom he died. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we ſhould put up prayers to him for all men, becauſe he deſires the ſalvation of all men, and hath ſent his Son to purchaſe the ſalvation of all men by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and, in virtue of that ſacrifice, to be the only Mediator between God and us: I ſay, though this be the immediate ſcope and deſign of theſe words, yet they are likewiſe a direction to us, unto whom we ought to addreſs our prayers, namely, to God; and by whoſe mediation and interceſſion we ought to put up our prayers to God the Father, namely, by his Son Jeſus Chriſt, who is conſtituted the only *Mediator between God and men.*

There are ſeveral propoſitions contained in this and the following verſe. But I ſhall at preſent confine myſelf to the firſt, namely, That *there is one God*; that is, *but one*; as St. Paul elſewhere expreſſeth it, *There is none other God but one*, 1 Cor. viii. 4. And Moſes lays this as the foundation of the natural law, as well as of the Jewiſh religion, *The Lord he is one God; there is none elſe beſides him*, Deut. iv. 35.; that is, beſides Jehovah, whom the people of Iſrael did worſhip as the only true God. And this the Prophet Iſaiah perpetually declares, in oppoſition to the Polytheiſm and variety of gods among the Heathen, Iſ. xliv. 6. *I am the firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God.* And again, ỳ 8. *Is there a God beſides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any.* He, who hath an infinite knowledge, and knows all things, knows no other God. And our bleſſed Saviour makes this the fundamental article of all religion, and the knowledge of it neceſſary to every man's ſalvation: *This* (ſays he) *is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The unity of the divine nature is a notion wherein the greateſt and the wiſeſt part of mankind did always agree; and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be either natural, or to have ſprung from ſome original tradition delivered down to us from the firſt parents of mankind: I mean, that there is one ſupreme being, the author and cauſe of all things, whom the moſt ancient of the Heathen poets commonly called *the father of gods and men.* And thus Ariſtotle, in his metaphyſicks, defines God, "the eternal, and moſt excellent, or beſt, of "all living beings." And this notion of one ſupreme being agrees very well with that exact harmony which appears in the frame and government of the world; in which we ſee all things conſpiring to one end, and continuing in one uniform order and courſe; which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any other but a conſtant and uniform cauſe; and which to a conſidering man does plainly ſhew, that all things are made and governed by that one powerful principle, and great and wiſe mind, which we call *God.*

But although the generality of mankind had a notion of one ſupreme God, yet the idolatry of the Heathen plainly ſhews, that this notion, in proceſs of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehenſion of a plurality of gods; though in reaſon it is evident enough that there can be no more gods than one; and that one, who is of infinite perfection, is as ſufficient to all purpoſes whatſoever, as ten thouſand deities, if they were poſſible, could poſſibly be; as I ſhall ſhew in the following diſcourſe.

Now, this multitude of deities, which the fond ſuperſtition and vain imagination of men had formed to themſelves, were by the wiſer ſort, who, being forced to comply with the follies of the people, endeavoured to make the beſt of them, ſuppoſed to be either parts of the univerſe; which the Egyptians, as Plutarch tells us, thought to be the ſame with God; but then the more conſiderable parts of the univerſe they parcelled out into ſeveral deities: and as the ocean hath ſeveral names, according to the ſeveral coaſts and countries by which it paſſeth; ſo they gave ſeveral names to this one Deity, according

to

to the ſeveral parts of the world which ſeveral nations made the objects of their worſhip:

Or elſe they adored the ſeveral perfections and powers of the one ſupreme God, under ſeveral names and titles, with regard to the various bleſſings and benefits which they thought they received from him.

Thus the Indian philoſophers, the Brachmans, are ſaid to have worſhipped the ſun as the ſupreme Deity: and he certainly is the moſt worſhipful of all ſenſible beings, and bids faireſt for a Deity; eſpecially if he was, as they ſuppoſed, animated by a ſpirit endued with knowledge and underſtanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark cave, ſhould all on the ſudden be brought out at noon-day to behold this viſible world; after he had viewed and conſidered it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the ſun as the moſt likely, of all the things he had ſeen, to be a Deity. For if ſuch a man had any notion of a God, and were to chuſe one upon ſight, he would without diſpute fix upon the ſun, and fall down before him and worſhip him.

And Macrobius manageth this as his main plea for the idolatry of the Heathen, that under all the ſeveral names of their gods they worſhipped the ſun: and this diverſity of names was but a more diſtinct conception and acknowledgment of the many bleſſings and advantages which mankind received from him, and a more particular and expreſs adoration of the ſeveral powers and perfections which were in him. And this was the very beſt defence, and all the tolerable ſenſe which the wiſeſt among the Heathen could make of the multitude of their deities.

And yet whilſt they generally owned one ſupreme being that was the principle and original of all things, they worſhipped ſeveral ſubordinate deities, as really diſtinct from one another. Some of theſe they fancied to be ſuperior to the reſt, and to have their reſidence in heaven; by which Marſilius Ficinus ſuppoſes Plato to mean no more but the chief of the angels. Theſe were called θεοὶ, *dii ſuperi*, and *dii cœleſtes*; "ſuperior and heavenly gods." The ſcripture terms them *the hoſt of heaven*, meaning the ſun, moon, and ſtars; which they

ſuppoſed to be animated, or at leaſt to be inhabited by angels, or glorious ſpirits, whom they called *gods*.

Other of their deities were accounted much inferior to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the ſouls of their deceas'd heroes; who, for their great and worthy deeds when they lived upon earth, were ſuppoſed after death to be tranſlated into the number of their gods; and theſe were called *ſemidei* and *deaſtri*; that is, "half gods, and "a ſort of gods." And as the other were celeſtial, ſo theſe were δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι, a kind of terreſtrial ſpirits, that were preſidents and procurators of human affairs here below; that is, a middle ſort of divine powers, that were mediators and agents between God and men, and did carry the prayers and ſupplications of men to God, and bring down the commands and bleſſings of God to men.

But in the midſt of all this crowd and confuſion of deities, and the various ſuperſtitions about them, the wiſer Heathen, as Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Ariſtotle, Tully, Plutarch, and others, preſerved a true notion of one ſupreme God, whom they defined, "An in- "finite Spirit, pure from all matter, and free from all "imperfection:" and all the variety of their worſhip was, as they pretended in excuſe of it, but a more particular owning of the various repreſentations of the divine power and excellencies which manifeſted themſelves in the world, and of the ſeveral communications of bleſſings and favours by them imparted to men. And Tertullian (*adverſus Marcionem*, *l.* 1. *c.* 10.) obſerves, that even when idolatry had very much obſcured the glory of the ſovereign Deity, yet the greater part of mankind did ſtill, in their common forms of ſpeech, appropriate the name of God in a more eſpecial and peculiar manner to one, ſaying, "If God grant, If God pleaſe," and the like.

So that there is ſufficient ground to believe, that the unity of the divine nature, or the notion of one ſupreme God, creator and governor of the world, was the primitive and general belief of mankind; and that polytheiſm and idolatry were a corruption and degeneracy from the original notion which mankind had concerning God; as the ſcripture-hiſtory doth declare and teſtify.

And

And this account which I have given of the Heathen idolatry doth by no means excuſe it. For whatever may be ſaid by way of extenuation in behalf of ſome few of the wiſer and more devout among them, the generality were groſsly guilty both of believing more gods, and of worſhipping falſe gods.

And this muſt needs be a very great crime, ſince the ſcripture every where declares God to be particularly jealous in this caſe, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven images:* nay, we may not ſo much as make uſe of ſenſible images to put us in mind of God; leſt devout ignorance, ſeeing the worſhip which wiſe men paid towards an idol, ſhould be drawn to terminate their worſhip there, as being the very Deity itſelf; which was certainly the caſe of the greateſt part of the Heathen world.

And ſurely thoſe Chriſtians are in no leſs danger of idolatry, who pay a veneration to images, by kneeling down and praying before them: and in this they are much more inexcuſable, becauſe they offend againſt a much clearer light: and yet when they go about to juſtify this practice, are able to bring no other nor better pleas for themſelves than the Heathen did for their worſhipping of images, and for praying to their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as mediators between the gods in heaven and men upon earth.

There is but one objection, that I know of, againſt the general conſent of mankind concerning the unity of God; and it is this, That there was an ancient doctrine of ſome of the moſt ancient nations, that there were two firſt cauſes or principles of all things; the one the cauſe of all good, and the other of all the evil that is in the world: the reaſon whereof ſeems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of ſo contrary a nature, as good and evil, could proceed from one and the ſame cauſe.

And theſe two principles in ſeveral nations were called by ſeveral names. Plutarch ſays, that among the Greeks the good principle was called *God*, and the evil principle Δαίμων, or *the devil*. In conformity to which ancient tradition, the Manichees, a ſect, which called themſelves *Chriſtians*, did advance two principles; the one

one infinitely good, which they ſuppoſed to be the original cauſe of all the good which is in the world; the other infinitely evil, to which they aſcribed all the evils that are in the world.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient tradition concerning that old ſerpent the devil, the head of the fallen angels, who, by tempting our firſt parents to tranſgreſs a poſitive and expreſs law of God, brought ſin firſt into the world, and all the evils conſequent upon it; of which the ſcripture gives us a moſt expreſs and particular account.

And as to the notion of a being infinitely evil, into which this tradition was corrupted, after idolatry had prevailed in the world; beſides that it is a contradiction, it would likewiſe be to no purpoſe, to aſſert two oppoſite principles, of infinite, that is, of equal force and power; for two infinites muſt of neceſſity be equal to one another; becauſe nothing can be more or greater than infinite: and therefore, if two infinite beings were poſſible, they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwiſe.

Now, that the notion of a principle infinitely evil is a contradiction, will be very plain, if we conſider, that what is infinitely evil, muſt, in ſtrict reaſoning, and by neceſſary conſequence, be infinitely imperfect, and therefore infinitely weak; and for that reaſon, though never ſo malicious and miſchievous, yet, being infinitely weak and fooliſh, could never be in capacity either to contrive miſchief, or to execute it.

But if it ſhould be admitted, that a being infinitely miſchievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; becauſe the oppoſite principle of infinite goodneſs being alſo infinitely wiſe and powerful, they would tie up one another's hands. So that, upon this ſuppoſition, the notion of a Deity muſt ſignify juſt nothing; becauſe, by virtue of the eternal oppoſition and equal conflict of theſe two principles, they would keep one another at a perpetual bay; and being juſt an equal match to one another, the one having as much mind and power to do good, as the other to do evil; inſtead of being two deities, they would be but two idols, able to do neither good nor evil.

And

And having, I hope, now ſufficiently cleared this objection, I ſhall proceed to ſhew how agreeable this principle, That *there is but one God,* is to the common reaſon of mankind, and to the cleareſt and moſt eſſential notions which we have of God. And this will appear theſe two ways.

1. By conſidering the moſt eſſential perfections of the divine nature.

2. From the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of ſuppoſing more gods than one.

I. By conſidering the moſt eſſential perfections of the divine nature. Abſolute perfection, which we aſcribe to God, as the moſt eſſential notion which mankind hath always had concerning him, does neceſſarily ſuppoſe unity; becauſe this is eſſential to the notion of a being that is abſolutely perfect, that all perfection meets, and is united in ſuch a being: but to imagine more gods, and ſome perfections to be in one, and ſome in another, does deſtroy the moſt eſſential notion which men have of God; namely, that he is a being abſolutely perfect; that is, as perfect as is poſſible. Now, to ſuppoſe ſome perfections in one god, which are not in another, is to ſuppoſe ſome poſſible perfection to be wanting in God; which is a contradiction to the moſt natural and the moſt eaſy notion which all men have of God, that he is a being in whom all perfections do meet and are united: but if we ſuppoſe more gods, each of which hath all perfections united in him, then all but one would be ſuperfluous and needleſs; and therefore, by juſt and neceſſary conſequence, not only may, but of neceſſity muſt be ſuppoſed not to be, ſince neceſſary exiſtence is eſſential to the Deity: and therefore if but one God be neceſſary, there can be no more.

II. From the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of the contrary. For ſuppoſe there were more gods, two, for example; and if there may be two, there may be a million, for we can ſtop no where: I ſay, ſuppoſe two gods; either theſe two would be in all perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: if equal and alike in all things, then, as I ſaid before, one of them would be needleſs and ſuperfluous;

perfluous; and if one, why not as well the other? they being ſuppoſed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no neceſſity at all of the being of a God: and yet it is granted on all hands, that neceſſary exiſtence is eſſential to the notion of a God: but if they be unequal, that is, one of them inferior to and leſs perfect than the other, that which is inferior and leſs perfect could not be God, becauſe he would not have all perfection. So that, which way ſoever we turn the thing, and look upon it, the notion of more gods than one, is by its own repugnancy and ſelf-contradiction deſtructive of itſelf.

Before I come to apply this doctrine of the unity of God, I muſt not paſs by a very conſiderable difficulty, which will moſt certainly ariſe in every man's mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity, or of three real differences or diſtinct perſons in one and the ſame divine nature.

And though this be not a difficulty peculiar only to the Chriſtian religion, as by the generality of thoſe who urge this objection againſt Chriſtians hath been inconſiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before Chriſtianity appeared in the world, there was a very ancient tradition, both among Jews and Heathen, concerning three real differences or diſtinctions in the divine nature, very nearly reſembling the Chriſtian doctrine of the Trinity; as I ſhall have occaſion more fully to ſhew by and by: yet it cannot be denied, but that this difficulty doth in a more eſpecial manner affect the Chriſtian religion; the generality of Chriſtians, who do moſt firmly believe the Trinity, believing likewiſe, at the ſame time, more ſtedfaſtly, if it be poſſible, that there is but one God: *To us*, (ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 6.), that is, to us Chriſtians, *there is but one God.* But how can this poſſibly conſiſt with the common doctrine of Chriſtians concerning the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to each of whom they attribute, as they verily believe the ſcripture does, the moſt incommunicable properties and perfections of the divine nature? And what is this leſs in effect than to ſay, that there are three gods?

For

For the clearing of this difficulty, I ſhall, with all the brevity I can, offer theſe following conſiderations; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced judgment, will be ſufficient to remove it, or at leaſt to break the main force and ſtrength of it.

1. I deſire it may be well conſidered, that there is a wide difference between the nice ſpeculations of the ſchools, beyond what is revealed in ſcripture, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and what the ſcripture only teaches and aſſerts concerning this myſtery. For it is not to be denied, but that the ſchoolmen, who abounded in wit and leiſure, though very few among them had either exact ſkill in the holy ſcriptures, or in eccleſiaſtical antiquity, and the writings of the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church; I ſay, it cannot be denied, but that theſe ſpeculative and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their divinity out of their own brains, as ſpiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels, have ſtarted a thouſand ſubtilties about this myſtery, ſuch as no Chriſtian is bound to trouble his head withal: much leſs is it neceſſary for him to underſtand thoſe niceties, which we may reaſonably preſume that they who talk of them did themſelves never thoroughly underſtand; and, leaſt of all, is it neceſſary to believe them. The modeſty of Chriſtians is contented in divine myſteries to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curioſity to be *wiſe above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God ſays concerning theſe matters; and, if any man will venture to ſay more, every other man ſurely is at his liberty, to believe as he ſees reaſon.

2. I deſire it may, in the next place, be conſidered, that the doctrine of the Trinity, even as it is aſſerted in ſcripture, is acknowledged by us to be ſtill a great myſtery, and ſo imperfectly revealed, as to be in a great meaſure incomprehenſible by human reaſon. And therefore, though ſome learned and judicious men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great myſtery by the ſtrength of reaſon; yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of ſuch an attempt, and mine own inſufficiency for it.

All

All that I ever deſigned upon this argument was, to make out the credibility of the thing from the authority of the holy ſcriptures, without deſcending to a more particular explication of it than the ſcripture hath given us; leſt, by endeavouring to lay the difficulties which are already ſtarted about it, new ones ſhould be raiſed, and ſuch as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than thoſe which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in ſome meaſure done in one of the former diſcourſes, [*Ser.* 44.]. Nor indeed do I ſee, that it is any ways neceſſary to do more; it being ſufficient, that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter; and that we do firmly believe what he ſays concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath ſaid about it.

For in this, and the like caſes, I take an implicit faith to be very commendable; that is, to believe whatever we are ſufficiently aſſured God hath revealed, though we do not fully underſtand his meaning in ſuch a revelation. And thus every man who believes the holy ſcriptures to be a truly divine revelation, does implicitly believe a great part of the prophetical books of ſcripture, and ſeveral obſcure expreſſions in thoſe books, though he do not particularly underſtand the meaning of all the predictions and expreſſions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good Chriſtians who do not believe and comprehend the myſteries of faith nicely enough to approve themſelves to a ſcholaſtical and magiſterial judge of controverſies, who yet, if they do heartily embrace the doctrines which are clearly revealed in ſcripture, and live up to the plain precepts of the Chriſtian religion, will, I doubt not, be very well approved by the great and juſt, and by the infallibly infallible judge of the world.

3. Let it be further conſidered, that though neither the word *trinity*, nor perhaps *perſon*, in the ſenſe in which it is uſed by divines when they treat of this myſtery, be any where to be met with in ſcripture; yet it cannot be denied, but that three are there ſpoken of by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, in whoſe name every Chriſtian is baptized, and to each of whom the higheſt titles and properties of God are in ſcripture attributed;

attributed; and these three are spoken of with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of three several persons.

So that though the word *trinity* be not found in scripture, yet these three are there expressly and frequently mentioned; and a trinity is nothing but three of any thing. And so likewise, though the word *person* be not there expressly applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these three. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this term. For since the Holy Spirit of God in scripture hath thought fit, in speaking of these three, to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish three several persons, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this mystery, which purely depends upon divine revelation, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the scripture doth: and though the word *person* is now become a term of art, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the scripture says in other words.

4. It deserves further to be considered, that there hath been a very ancient tradition concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Whence this tradition had its original, is not easy, upon good and certain grounds, to say. But certain it is, that the Jews anciently had this notion; and that they did distinguish *the Word of God*, and *the Holy Spirit of God*, from him who was absolutely called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the first principle of all things; as is plain from Philo Judæus, and Moses Nachmanides, and others, cited by the learned Grotius, in his incomparable book *of the truth of the Christian religion*, book 5.

And, among the Heathen, Plato, who probably enough might have this notion from the Jews, did make three distinctions in the Deity, by the names of *Essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever objections this matter may be liable

to, it is not ſo peculiar a doctrine of the Chriſtian religion, as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearneſs and certainty: and, conſequently, neither the Jews nor Plato have any reaſon to object it to us Chriſtians; eſpecially ſince they pretend no other ground for it but either their own reaſon, or an ancient tradition from their fathers: whereas we Chriſtians do appeal to expreſs divine revelation for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it ſingly upon that account.

5. It is beſides very conſiderable, that the ſcriptures do deliver this doctrine of the Trinity without any manner of doubt or queſtion concerning the unity of the divine nature; and not only ſo, but do moſt ſtedfaſtly and conſtantly aſſert, that there is but one God. And in thoſe very texts in which theſe three differences are mentioned, the unity of the divine nature is expreſsly aſſerted; as where St. John makes mention of *the Father*, *the Word*, and *the Spirit*, the unity of theſe three is likewiſe affirmed: *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and theſe three are one.*

6. It is yet further conſiderable, that from this myſtery, as delivered in ſcripture, a plurality of Gods cannot be inferred without making the ſcripture groſsly to contradict itſelf; which I charitably ſuppoſe the Socinians would be as loth to admit as we ourſelves are. And if either councils, or fathers, or ſchoolmen, have ſo explained this myſtery, as to give any juſt ground, or ſo much as a plauſible colour for ſuch an inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the holy ſcriptures; but rather, as the Apoſtle ſays in another caſe, *let God be true, and every man a liar.*

7. and laſtly, I deſire it may be conſidered, that it is not repugnant to reaſon, to believe ſome things which are incomprehenſible by our reaſon; provided that we have ſufficient ground and reaſon for the belief of them: eſpecially if they be concerning God, who is in his nature incomprehenſible; and we be well aſſured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us, that theſe differences in the Deity are incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings; becauſe the divine

vine nature itſelf is ſo, and yet the belief of that is the foundation of all religion.

There are a great many things in nature which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the continuity of matter; that is, how the parts of it do hang ſo faſt together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are ſure that it is ſo, becauſe we ſee it every day. So likewiſe, how the ſmall ſeeds of things contain the whole form and nature of the things from which they proceed, and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly ſee this every year.

There are many things likewiſe in ourſelves, which no man is able in any meaſure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the vital union of ſoul and body. Who can imagine by what device or means a ſpirit comes to be ſo cloſely united and ſo firmly linked to a material body, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature? The like may be ſaid of the operations of our ſeveral faculties of ſenſe and imagination, of memory and reaſon, and eſpecially of the liberty of our wills: and yet we certainly find all theſe faculties in ourſelves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the ſeveral operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of thoſe operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in ourſelves, much leſs can we expect to comprehend things without us; and leaſt of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God, and every thing belonging to him. For God himſelf is certainly the greateſt myſtery of all other, and acknowledged by mankind to be in his nature, and in the particular manner of his exiſtence, incomprehenſible by human underſtanding. And the reaſon of this is very evident; becauſe God is infinite, and our knowledge and underſtanding is but finite: and yet no ſober man ever thought this a good reaſon to call the being of God in queſtion.

The ſame may be ſaid of God's certain knowledge of future contingencies, which depend upon the uncertain

wills of free agents; it being utterly inconceivable, how any underſtanding, how large and perfect ſoever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the free will of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain cauſe.

And yet the ſcripture doth not only attribute this foreknowledge to God; but gives us alſo plain inſtances of God's foretelling ſuch things, many ages before they happened, as could not come to paſs but by the ſins of men; in which we are ſure that God can have no hand, though nothing can happen without his permiſſion. Such was that moſt memorable event of the death of Chriſt, who, as the ſcripture tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and ſlain:* and yet even this is ſaid to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledge of God;* and was punctually foretold by him ſome hundreds of years before. Nay, the ſcripture doth not only aſcribe this power and perfection to the divine knowledge, but natural reaſon hath been forced to acknowledge it; as we may ſee in ſome of the wiſeſt of the philoſophers. And yet it would puzzle the greateſt philoſopher that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any knowledge whatſoever can certainly and infallibly foreſee an event through uncertain and contingent cauſes. All the reaſonable ſatisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that infinite knowledge may have ways of knowing things, which our finite underſtandings can by no means comprehend how they can poſſibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable, than how a thing ſhould be of itſelf, and without any cauſe of its being: and yet our reaſon compels us to acknowledge this; becauſe we certainly ſee, that ſomething is, which muſt either have been of itſelf, and without a cauſe, or elſe ſomething that we do not ſee muſt have been of itſelf, and have made all other things. And by this reaſoning, we are forced to acknowledge a Deity; the mind of man being able to find no reſt, but in the acknowledgment of one eternal and wiſe mind, as the principle and firſt cauſe of all other things: and this principle is that which mankind do by general conſent call *God*. So that God hath laid a ſure foundation of

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our acknowledgment of his being in the reaſon of our own minds. And though it be one of the hardeſt things in the world, to conceive how any thing can be of itſelf; yet neceſſity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: and this being once granted, our reaſon being tired in trying all other ways, will, for its own quiet and eaſe, force us at laſt to fall in with the general apprehenſion and belief of mankind concerning a Deity.

To give but one inſtance more: There is the like difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made out of nothing: and yet our reaſon doth oblige us to believe it; becauſe matter, which is a very imperfect being, and merely paſſive, muſt either always have been of itſelf, or elſe, by the infinite power of a moſt perfect and active being, muſt have been made out of nothing. Which is much more credible, than that any thing ſo imperfect as matter is, ſhould be of itſelf; becauſe that which is of itſelf, cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its being and perfection; for by the ſame reaſon that it neceſſarily is and of itſelf, it muſt neceſſarily have all perfection, which it is certain matter hath not: and yet neceſſary exiſtence is ſo great a perfection, that we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe any thing that hath this perfection, to want any other.

Thus you ſee, by theſe inſtances, that it is not repugnant to reaſon, to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whoſe exiſtence we are not able to give a particular and diſtinct account. And much leſs is it repugnant to reaſon, to believe thoſe things concerning God, which we are very well aſſured he hath declared concerning himſelf, though theſe things by our reaſon ſhould be incomprehenſible.

And this is truly the caſe as to the matter now under debate. We are ſufficiently aſſured, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, and that this myſtery of the Trinity is therein declared to us. Now, that we cannot comprehend it, is no ſufficient reaſon not to believe it: for, if this were a good reaſon for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God; becauſe his nature is moſt certainly incomprehenſible. But we are aſſured by many arguments that there is a God; and

the ſame natural reaſon which aſſures us that he is, doth likewiſe aſſure us, that he is incomprehenſible: and therefore our believing him to be ſo, doth by no means overthrow our belief of his being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by divine revelation of the truth of this doctrine of the Trinity; and being once aſſured of that, our not being able fully to comprehend it, is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the frame of this world which he ſees with his eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow, that either that or ſomething elſe muſt be of itſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

And by the ſame reaſon, a man muſt not deny what God ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God ſays: as particularly concerning this myſtery of the Trinity. It ought then to ſatisfy us, that there is ſufficient evidence, that this doctrine is delivered in ſcripture; and that what is there declared concerning it, doth not imply a contradiction. For why ſhould our finite underſtandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite; or to know all the real differences that are conſiſtent with the unity of an infinite being; or to be able fully to explain this myſtery by any ſimilitude or reſemblance taken from finite beings?

But, before I leave this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the church of Rome are perpetually objecting to us upon this occaſion; and it is this: That by the ſame reaſon that we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we may and muſt receive that of tranſubſtantiation. God forbid: Becauſe of all the doctrines that ever were in any religion, this of tranſubſtantiation is certainly the moſt abominably abſurd.

However, this objection plainly ſhews how fondly and obſtinately they are addicted to their own errors, how miſhapen and monſtrous ſoever; inſomuch that, rather than the dictates of their church, how abſurd ſoever, ſhould be called in queſtion, they will queſtion the truth

truth even of Chriſtianity itſelf; and if we will not take in tranſubſtantiation, and admit it to be a neceſſary article of the Chriſtian faith, they grow ſo ſullen and deſperate, that they matter not what becomes of all the reſt: and rather than not have their will of us in that which is controverted, they will give up that which by their own confeſſion is an undoubted article of the Chriſtian faith, and not controverted on either ſide; except only by the Socinians, who yet are hearty enemies to tranſubſtantiation, and have expoſed the abſurdity of it with great advantage.

But I ſhall endeavour to return a more particular anſwer to this objection, and ſuch a one as I hope will ſatisfy every conſiderate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and ſwaggering of theirs, there is by no means equal reaſon either for the receiving, or for the rejecting of theſe two doctrines of the Trinity and tranſubſtantiation.

1. There is not equal reaſon for the belief of theſe two doctrines. This objection, if it be of any force, muſt ſuppoſe that there is equal evidence and proof from ſcripture for theſe two doctrines. But this we utterly deny; and with great reaſon; becauſe it is no more evident from the words of ſcripture, that the ſacramental bread is ſubſtantially changed into Chriſt's natural body by virtue of thoſe words, *This is my body*, than it is, that Chriſt is ſubſtantially changed into a natural vine by virtue of thoſe words, John xv. 1. *I am the true vine*; or than that the rock in the wilderneſs, of which the Iſraelites drank, was ſubſtantially changed into the perſon of Chriſt, becauſe it is expreſsly ſaid, *that Rock was Chriſt*; or than that the Chriſtian church is ſubſtantially changed into the natural body of Chriſt, becauſe it is in expreſs terms ſaid of the church, that *it is his body*, Eph. i. 23.

But beſides this, ſeveral of their own moſt learned writers have freely acknowledged, that tranſubſtantiation can neither be directly proved, nor neceſſarily concluded from ſcripture. But this the writers of the Chriſtian church did never acknowledge concerning the Trinity, and the divinity of Chriſt; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable teſtimonies of ſcripture for the proof of theſe

theſe doctrines. And then the whole force of the objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am ſure God ſays, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the ſame reaſon to believe the greateſt abſurdity in the world, though I have no manner of aſſurance of any divine revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we underſtand not tranſubſtantiation, yet we very well underſtand what they would have, but cannot grant it; becauſe there is not equal reaſon to believe two things, for one of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

2. Neither is there equal reaſon for the rejecting of theſe two doctrines. This the objection ſuppoſes, which yet cannot be ſuppoſed, but upon one or both of theſe two grounds; either becauſe theſe two doctrines are equally incomprehenſible; or becauſe they are equally loaded with abſurdities and contradictions.

1*ſt*, The firſt is no good ground of rejecting any doctrine, merely becauſe it is incomprehenſible; as I have abundantly ſhewed already. But beſides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of ſenſe, and myſteries concerning God; and it does by no means follow, that if a man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot comprehend, he hath no reaſon afterwards to believe what he himſelf ſees. This is a moſt unreaſonable and deſtructive way of arguing; becauſe it ſtrikes at the foundation of all certainty, and ſets every man at liberty to deny the moſt plain and evident truths of Chriſtianity, if he may not be humoured in having the abſurdeſt things in the world admitted for true. The next ſtep will be, to perſuade us, that we may as well deny the being of God, becauſe his nature is incomprehenſible by our reaſon, as deny tranſubſtantiation, becauſe it evidently contradicts our ſenſes.

2*dly*, Nor are theſe two doctrines loaded with the like abſurdities and contradictions. So far from this, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is delivered in the ſcriptures, and hath already been explained, hath no abſurdity or contradiction, either involved in it, or neceſſarily conſequent upon it. But the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is big with all imaginable abſurdity and contradiction. And their own ſchoolmen have ſufficiently

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expoſed it; eſpecially Scotus: and he deſigned to do ſo; as any man that attentively reads him, may plainly diſcover: for, in his diſputation about it, he treats this doctrine with the greateſt contempt, as a new invention of the council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III.; to the decree of which council concerning it he ſeems to pay a formal ſubmiſſion, but really derides it as contrary to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, and not at all ſupported by ſcripture; as any one may eaſily diſcern that will carefully conſider his manner of handling it, and the reſult of his whole diſputation about it.

And now, ſuppoſe there were ſome appearance of abſurdity and contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity as it is delivered in ſcripture, muſt we therefore believe a doctrine which is not at all revealed in ſcripture, and which hath certainly in it all the abſurdities in the world, and all the contradictions to ſenſe and reaſon, and which, once admitted, doth at once deſtroy all certainty? Yes, ſay they, why not? ſince we of the church of Rome are ſatisfied that this doctrine is revealed in ſcripture; or, if it be not, is defined by the church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between us and them, but even among themſelves, at leaſt till the council of Trent; and this upon ſuch unreaſonable terms, that we muſt either yield this point to them, or elſe renounce a doctrine agreed on both ſides to be revealed in ſcripture?

To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this proceeding, let us ſuppoſe a prieſt of the church of Rome preſſing a Jew or Turk to the belief of tranſubſtantiation, and becauſe one kindneſs deſerves another, the Jew or Turk ſhould demand of him the belief of all the fables in the Talmud, or in the Alchoran; ſince none of theſe, nor indeed all of them together, are near ſo abſurd as tranſubſtantiation: would not this be much more reaſonable and equal than what they demand of us; ſince no abſurdity, how monſtrous and big ſoever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an underſtanding in which a breach hath been already made wide enough to admit tranſubſtantiation? The prieſts of Baal did not half ſo much deſerve to be expoſed by the Prophet for their ſuperſtition and folly,

folly, as the prieſts of the church of Rome do for this ſenſeleſs and ſtupid doctrine of theirs with a hard name. I ſhall only add this one thing more, that if this doctrine were poſſible to be true, and clearly proved to be ſo; yet it would be evidently uſeleſs, and to no purpoſe. For it pretends to change the ſubſtance of one thing into the ſubſtance of another thing that is already, and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpoſe? Not to make the body of Chriſt; for that was already in being: and the ſubſtance of the bread is loſt; nothing of it remaineth but the accidents, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing, when the ſubſtance is deſtroyed and gone.

All that now remains, is, to make ſome practical inferences from this doctrine of the unity of the divine nature. And they ſhall be the ſame which God himſelf makes by Moſes, Deut. vi. 4. 5.; which text is alſo cited by our Saviour, Mark xii. 29. 30. 31. *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength. And thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* So that, according to our Saviour, the whole duty of man, the *love of God*, and *of our neighbour*, is founded in the unity of the divine nature.

1. The love of God: *The Lord our God is one Lord*; therefore *thou ſhalt love him with all thine heart*, &c. *This is the firſt and great commandment.* And it comprehends in it all the duties of the firſt table, as naturally flowing from it; as, that we ſhould ſerve him only, and pay no religious worſhip to any but to him: for to pay religious worſhip to any thing, is to make it a God, and to acknowledge it for ſuch; and therefore God being but one, we can give religious worſhip to none but to him only. And among all the parts of religious worſhip, none is more peculiarly appropriated to the Deity than ſolemn invocation and prayer: for he to whom men addreſs their requeſts, at all times, and in all places, muſt be ſuppoſed to be always every where preſent, to underſtand all our deſires and wants, and to be able to ſupply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewiſe from the unity of the divine nature may be

be inferred, that we ſhould not worſhip God by any ſenſible image or repreſentation; becauſe God being a ſingular being, there is nothing like him, or that can, without injuring and debaſing his moſt ſpiritual, and perfect, and immenſe being, be compared to him; as he himſelf ſpeaks in the Prophet, Iſ. xlvi. 5. *To whom will ye liken me, ſaith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore with no diſtinction whatſoever can it be lawful to give religious worſhip, or any part of it, to any but God. We can pray to none but to him, becauſe he only is every where preſent, and *only knows the hearts of all the children of men*, 1 Kings viii. 39.; which Solomon gives as the reaſon why we ſhould addreſs our ſupplications to God only, *who dwelleth in the heavens.*

So that the reaſon of theſe two precepts is founded in the unity and ſingularity of the divine nature; and, unleſs there be more gods than one, we muſt worſhip him only, and pray to none but him; becauſe we can give invocation to none, but to him only whom we believe to be God; as St. Paul reaſons, Rom. x. 14. *How ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

2. The love likewiſe of our neighbour is founded in the unity of the divine nature, and may be inferred from it: *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord*; therefore *thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* And the Apoſtle gives this reaſon why Chriſtians ſhould be at unity among themſelves, Eph. iv. 6. *There is one God and Father of all;* and therefore we ſhould *keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace;* that is, live in mutual love and peace. The Prophet likewiſe aſſigns this reaſon why all mankind ſhould be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, Mal. ii. 10. *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherouſly every man againſt his brother?*

And therefore, when we ſee ſuch hatred and enmity among men, ſuch diviſions and animoſities among Chriſtians, we may not only aſk St. Paul's queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided,* that we cannot agree about ſerving him; either all to ſerve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences? I ſay, we may not only aſk St. Paul's queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided?* but may aſk further, Is God divided?

divided? Is there not one God? and are we not all his offspring? Are we not all the ſons of Adam, who was the ſon of God? So that, if we trace ourſelves to our original, we ſhall find a great nearneſs and equality among men. And this equality, that we are all God's creatures and image, and that the one only God is the father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of thoſe petty differences and diſtinctions, of ſtrong and weak, of rich and poor, of wiſe and fooliſh, of baſe and honourable, can be to encourage men to any thing of inſolence, injuſtice, and inequality of dealing one towards another: becauſe that wherein we all agree, that we are the creatures and children of God, and have all one common father, is eſſential and conſtant; but thoſe things wherein we differ, are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken concerning the firſt propoſition in the text, There is one God. To him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be all honour, and glory, dominion, and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIX.

Concerning reſolution and ſtedfaſtneſs in religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, June 3. 1684.

The PREFACE to the Reader.

BEing, I hope, for the remainder of my life, releaſed from that irkſome and unpleaſant work of controverſy and wrangling about religion, I ſhall now turn my thoughts to ſomething more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true religion,

gion, to the happineſs of human ſociety, and the reformation of the world.

I have no intention to reflect upon any that ſtand up in defence of the truth, and contend earneſtly *for it, endeavouring* in the ſpirit of meekneſs *to reclaim thoſe that are in error. For I doubt not but a very good man may upon ſeveral occaſions be almoſt unavoidably engaged in controverſies of religion; and if he have a head clear and cool enough, ſo as to be maſter of his own notions and temper in that hot kind of ſervice, he may therein do conſiderable advantage to the truth: though a man that hath once drawn blood in controverſy, as Mr. Mede expreſſeth it, is ſeldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

For this reaſon, a good man ſhould not be very willing, when his Lord comes, *to* be found ſo doing, *and as it were* beating his fellow-ſervants. *And all controverſy, as it is uſually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the world reeking hot from a ſharp contention with a perverſe adverſary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himſelf in this temper tranſlated into the calm and peaceable regions of the bleſſed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.*

I know not whether St. Paul, who had been taken up into the third heavens, *did by that queſtion of his,* Where is the diſputer of THIS WORLD? *intend to inſinuate, that this wrangling work hath place only in this world, and upon this earth, where only there is a duſt to be raiſed; but will have no place in the other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing itſelf I think is true, that in the other world all things will be clear, and paſt diſpute. To be ſure, among the bleſſed; and probably alſo among the miſerable, unleſs fierce and furious contentions, with great heat without light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, ſhould be deſigned for a part of their torment.*

As to the following ſermons, I am ſenſible that the ſtyle of them is more looſe and full of words, than is agreeable to juſt and exact diſcourſes; but ſo I think the ſtyle of popular ſermons ought to be: and therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chuſing rather that they ſhould appear in that native ſimplicity in which, ſo many years ago, they were firſt framed, than dreſſed up with too much care

and art. As they are, I hope the candid and ingenuous readers will take them in good part.

And I do heartily wiſh, that all that are concerned in the reſpective duties treated on in the following ſermons, would be perſuaded ſo to lay them to heart, as to put them effectually in practice: that how much ſoever the reformation of this corrupt and degenerate age in which we live is almoſt utterly to be deſpaired of, we may yet have a more comfortable proſpect of future times, by ſeeing the foundation of a better world begun to be laid in the careful and conſcientious diſcharge of the duties here mentioned; that by this means the generations to come may know God, and the children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

I have great reaſon to be ſenſible how faſt the infirmities of age are coming upon me, and therefore muſt work the works of him *whoſe providence hath placed me in the ſtation wherein I am,* whilſt it is day; becauſe the night cometh when no man can work.

I knew very well, before I entered upon this great and weighty charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my beſt abilities were for the due diſcharge of it; but I did not feel this ſo ſenſibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore, that I might make ſome ſmall amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to ſpare from almoſt perpetual buſineſs of one kind or other, than in preparing ſomething for the publick that might be of uſe to recover the decayed piety and virtue of the preſent age, in which iniquity doth ſo much abound, and the love of God and religion is grown ſo cold.

To this end I have choſen to publiſh theſe plain ſermons, and to recommend them to the ſerious peruſal and faithful practice both of the paſtors and people committed to my charge; earneſtly beſeeching almighty God, that, by his bleſſing, they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are ſincerely deſigned.

The

The SERMON.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

—But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

AFter Joſhua had brought the people of Iſrael into the promiſed land, and ſettled them in the quiet poſſeſſion of it, his great deſire was, to eſtabliſh them in the true religion, namely, in the worſhip of the one true God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and given them the poſſeſſion of that good land, the land of Canaan.

And now, finding himſelf weak and declining, being an hundred and ten years old, and fearing leſt after his death the people ſhould fall off from the true religion to the worſhip of idols; he, like a wiſe and good governor, conſiders with himſelf what courſe he had beſt to take to keep them firm and ſtedfaſt in their religion, and to prevent their defection to the idolatry of the nations round about them.

And to this end he calls a general aſſembly of *all Iſrael*, chap. xxiii. 2.; that is, of the elders, and heads, and judges, and officers of the ſeveral tribes; and, in a very wiſe and eloquent ſpeech, repreſents to them in what a miraculous manner God had *driven out the nations before them, much greater and ſtronger nations than they*, and had given them their land to poſſeſs it; and, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promiſed to them.

And therefore they ought to *take good heed to themſelves, to love God, and to ſerve him*; and if they did not, he tells them, that it ſhould *come to paſs, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promiſed you; ſo ſhall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have deſtroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you*, chap. xxiii. 15.

After this, he calls them together a ſecond time, and gives them a brief hiſtorical account and deduction of the

great mercies of God to them and their fathers, from the days of Abraham, whom he had called out from among his idolatrous kindred and countrymen, unto that day.

From the conſideration of all which, he earneſtly exhorts them to renew their covenant with God; and, for his particular ſatisfaction, before he left the world, ſolemnly to promiſe that they would for ever ſerve God, and forſake the ſervice of idols: *Now therefore, fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt: and ſerve ye the Lord,* chap. xxiv. 14.

And then, in the text, by a very elegant ſcheme of ſpeech, he does, as it were, once more ſet them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themſelves to God by covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice: *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve; whether the gods which your fathers ſerved, that were on the other ſide of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whoſe land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would ſerve the true God or not; but to inſinuate to them, that religion ought to be their free choice: and likewiſe, that the true religion hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate man's choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you;* as if he had ſaid, If after all the demonſtrations which God hath given of his miraculous preſence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you, by bringing you out of the land of Egypt, and the houſe of bondage, by ſo outſtretched an arm; and by driving out the nations before you, and giving you their land to poſſeſs: if after all this, you can think it fit to quit the ſervice of this God, and to worſhip the idols of the nations whom you have ſubdued, thoſe vanquiſhed and baffled deities: if you can think it reaſonable ſo to do, but ſurely you cannot; then take your choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own reſolution, which he hopes will alſo be theirs; and as he had heretofore been their captain, ſo now he offers himſelf to be their example:

example: but whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fixed and immoveable in this reſolution: *But as for ME and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

In effect, he tells them, I have propoſed the beſt religion to your choice; and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all ſtedfaſtly adhere to it; it is ſo reaſonable and wiſe, ſo much your intereſt and your happineſs to do it. But if you ſhould do otherwiſe; if you ſhould be ſo weak as not to diſcern the truth, ſo wilful and ſo wicked as not to embrace it: though you ſhould all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worſhip of idols; I for my part am ſtedfaſtly reſolved what to do. In a caſe ſo manifeſt, in a matter ſo reaſonable, no number, no example ſhall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, ſtand alone in that which is ſo evidently and unqueſtionably right: and though this whole nation ſhould revolt all at once from the worſhip of the true God, and join with the reſt of the world in a falſe religion, and in the worſhip of idols; and mine were the only family left in all Iſrael, nay in the whole world, that continued to worſhip the God of Iſrael, I would ſtill be of the ſame mind; I would ſtill perſiſt in this reſolution, and act according to it: *As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

A reſolution truly worthy of ſo great a prince and ſo good a man: in which he is a double pattern to us.

1. Of the brave reſolution of a good man, namely, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion: *As for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

2. Of the pious care of a good father and maſter of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the true religion and worſhip of God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.*

I ſhall, at this time, by God's aſſiſtance, treat of the firſt of theſe, namely,

Firſt, Of the brave reſolution of a good man, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of God's true religion: *Chuſe you this day* (ſays Joſhua) *whom ye will ſerve: but as for ME, I will ſerve the*

Lord. Joſhua here puts the caſe at the utmoſt extremity, that not only the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and all the leſſer nations round about them, and in whoſe land they dwelt, were all long ſince revolted to idolatry, and pretended great antiquity and long preſcription for the worſhip of their falſe gods: but he ſuppoſeth yet further, that the only true and viſible church of God then known in the world, the people of Iſrael, ſhould likewiſe generally revolt, and forſake the worſhip of the true God, and cleave to the ſervice of idols: yet, in this caſe, if we could ſuppoſe it to happen, he declares his firm and ſtedfaſt reſolution to adhere to the worſhip of the true God; and though all others ſhould fall off from it, that he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion: *But as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

2. I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution from the objections to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable.

I. I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

1. The matter of this reſolution. Joſhua here reſolves, that if need were, and things were brought to that paſs, he would ſtand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion. And this is not a mere ſuppoſition of an impoſſible caſe, which can never happen: for it may, and hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world.

There hath been a general apoſtaſy of ſome great part of God's church from the belief and profeſſion of the true religion to idolatry, and to damnable errors and hereſies: and ſome good men have, upon the matter, ſtood alone in the open profeſſion of the true religion, in the midſt of this general defection from it.

Elijah, in that general revolt of the people of Iſrael, when they had *forſaken the covenant of the Lord, and broken down his altars, and ſlain his prophets, and he only,* as

he

he thought, *was left* to ſtand alone; I ſay, in this caſe, when, as he verily believed, he had no body to ſtand by him, *he was very jealous for the Lord God of hoſts*; and with an undaunted courage ſtood up for the worſhip of the true God, and reproved Ahab to his face for his defection to the worſhip of idols, 1 Kings xviii. 18.

And thoſe three brave youths, in the prophecy of Daniel, chap iii. did in the like reſolute and undaunted manner refuſe to obey the command of the great King Nebuchadnezzar, *to worſhip the image which he had ſet up*, when all others ſubmitted, and paid honour to it; telling him plainly, *If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not ſerve thy gods, nor worſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up*, ℣ 17. 18.

In like manner, and with the ſame ſpirit and courage, Daniel withſtood the decree of Darius, which forbade men *to aſk a petition of any God or man for thirty days, ſave of the king only*, Dan. vi. 7. and this under the pain of being *caſt into the den of lions*: and when all others gave obedience to it, he *ſet open the windows of his chamber towards Jeruſalem, and kneeled down upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime*, ℣ 10.

In the prevalency of the Arian hereſy, Athanaſius almoſt ſtood alone in the profeſſion and maintenance of the truth. And in the reign of antichriſt, the true church of God is repreſented by a woman flying into the wilderneſs, and living there in obſcurity for a long time; inſomuch that the profeſſors of the truth ſhould hardly be found. And yet, during that degeneracy of ſo great a part of the Chriſtian church, and the prevalency of antichriſt for ſo many ages, ſome few in every age did appear, who did reſolutely own the truth, and bear witneſs to it with their blood: but theſe did almoſt ſtand alone and by themſelves, like a few ſcattered ſheep wandering up and down in a wide wilderneſs.

Thus, in the height of Popery, Wickliffe appeared here in England; and Hierome of Prague, and John Huſs, in Germany and Bohemia. And in the beginning of

of the reformation, when Popery had quite over-run theſe Weſtern parts of the world, and ſubdued her enemies on every ſide, and antichriſt ſat ſecurely in the quiet poſſeſſion of his kingdom; Luther aroſe, a bold and rough man, but a fit wedge to cleave in ſunder ſo hard and knotty a block; and appeared ſtoutly againſt the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; and for a long time ſtood alone, and with a moſt invincible ſpirit and courage maintained his ground, and reſiſted the united malice and force of antichriſt and his adherents; and gave him ſo terrible a wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a man to ſtand alone, or with a very few adhering to him, and ſtanding by him, is not a mere imaginary ſuppoſition, but a caſe that hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world. Let us then proceed to conſider, in the

2. Second place, the due limits and bounds of this peremptory reſolution. In all matters of faith and practice which are plain and evident either from natural reaſon, or from divine revelation, this reſolution ſeems to be very reaſonable: but in things doubtful, a modeſt man, and every man hath reaſon to be ſo, would be very apt to be ſtaggered by the judgment of a very wiſe man, and much more of many ſuch; and eſpecially by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men; the general voice and opinion of mankind being next to the voice of God himſelf.

For in matters of an indifferent nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, ſuch as are many of the circumſtances and ceremonies of God's worſhip, a man would not be ſingular, much leſs ſtiff and immoveable in his ſingularity; but would be apt to yield and ſurrender himſelf to the general vote and opinion, and to comply with the common cuſtom and practice; and much more with the rules and conſtitutions of authority, whether civil or eccleſiaſtical: becauſe in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the rules of decency and civility not to thwart the general practice; and by the commands of God we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful commands of lawful authority.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of ſenſe or

or reaſon, or to the word of God, a man would compliment no man, or number of men: nor would he pin his faith upon any church in the world; much leſs upon any ſingle man, no not the Pope; no though there were never ſo many probable arguments brought for the proof of his infallibility.

In this caſe, a man would be ſingular, and ſtand alone againſt the whole world; againſt the wrath and rage of a King, and all the terrors of his fiery furnace: as in other matters, a man would not believe all the learned men in the world againſt the clear evidence of ſenſe and reaſon. If all the great mathematicians of all ages, Archimedes, and Euclid, and Apollonius, and Diophantus, *&c.* could be ſuppoſed to meet together in a general council, and ſhould there declare in the moſt ſolemn manner, and give it under their hands and ſeals, that twice two did not make four, but five; this would not move me in the leaſt to be of their mind: nay, I who am no mathematician, would maintain the contrary, and would perſiſt in it, without being in the leaſt ſtartled by the poſitive opinion of theſe great and learned men; and ſhould moſt certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their wits, or that they were biaſſed by ſome intereſt or other, and ſwayed, againſt the clear evidence of truth, and the full conviction of their own reaſon, to make ſuch a determination as this. They might indeed over-rule the point by their authority, but in my inward judgment I ſhould ſtill be where I was before.

Juſt ſo, in matters of religion, if any church, though with never ſo glorious and confident a pretence to infallibility, ſhould declare for tranſubſtantiation; that is, that the bread and wine in the ſacrament, by virtue of the conſecration of the prieſt, are ſubſtantially changed into the natural body and blood of Chriſt; this is ſo notoriouſly contrary both to the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, that a man ſhould chuſe to ſtand ſingle in the oppoſition of it, and laugh at, or rather pity the reſt of the world that could be ſo ſervilely blind, as ſeemingly to conſpire in the belief of ſo monſtrous an abſurdity.

And, in like manner, if any church ſhould declare, that images are to be worſhipped, or that the worſhip of God is to be performed in an unknown tongue; and that

that the holy ſcriptures, which contain the word and will of God, and teach men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal ſalvation, are to be locked up, and kept concealed from the people, in a language which they do not underſtand, leſt, if they were permitted the free uſe of them in their mother-tongue, they ſhould know more of the mind and will of God than is convenient for the common people to know, whoſe devotion and obedience to the church does mainly depend upon their ignorance; or ſhould declare, that the ſacrifice of Chriſt was not offered once for all, but is, and ought to be repeated ten millions of times every day; and that the people ought to receive the communion in one kind only, and the cup by no means to be truſted with them, for fear the profane beards of the laity ſhould drink of it; and that the ſaving efficacy of the ſacraments doth depend upon the intention of the prieſt, without which the receiver can have no benefit by them: theſe are all of them ſo plainly contrary to ſcripture, and moſt of them in reaſon ſo abſurd, that the authority of no church whatſoever can oblige a man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that being evidently contrary to the doctrine of the goſpel, though an Apoſtle, or an angel from heaven ſhould declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. Paul's authority and warrant; who, ſpeaking of ſome that *perverted the goſpel of Chriſt*, by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, (ſays he), *or an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again*, Though an Apoſtle, *though an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accurſed*, Gal. i. 7. 8. 9. You ſee he repeats it over again, to expreſs not only his own confident aſſurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an anathema with a witneſs, which we may confidently oppoſe to all the anathema's which the council of Trent hath ſo liberally denounced againſt all thoſe who ſhall preſume to gainſay theſe new doctrines of their church; which are in truth *another goſpel* than that which our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles taught: and yet, on their

ſide,

ſide, there is neither an Apoſtle, nor an angel from heaven in the caſe.

To give but one inſtance more: If Bellarmine ſhall tell me, as he expreſsly does, that "if the Pope ſhould declare virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, I were "bound to believe him, unleſs I would ſin againſt conſcience;" and if all the world ſhould ſay the ſame that Bellarmine does, namely, that this infallible declarer of virtue and vice were to be believed and followed: yet I could not poſſibly be of their mind; for this plain and undeniable reaſon, Becauſe if virtue and vice be all one, then religion is nothing; ſince the main deſign of religion is, to teach men the difference between virtue and vice, and to oblige them to practiſe the one, and to refrain from the other: and if religion be nothing, then heaven and hell are nothing: and if heaven be nothing, then an infallible guide thither is of no uſe, and to no manner of purpoſe; becauſe he is a guide no whither, and ſo his great office ceaſes and falls of itſelf.

And now, leſt any ſhould think me ſingular in this aſſertion, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the ſingle judgment of private perſons, and too little to the authority of a church, I will produce the deliberate judgment of a very learned man, and a great aſſerter of the church's authority, concerning the matter I am now ſpeaking of: I mean Mr. Hooker, in his deſervedly admired book *of eccleſiaſtical polity*. His words are theſe: "I grant, (ſays he), that proof derived "from the authority of man's judgment, is not able "to work that aſſurance which doth grow by a ſtronger "proof: and therefore, although ten thouſand general "councils ſhould ſet down one and the ſame definitive "ſentence concerning any point of religion whatſoever; "yet one demonſtrative reaſon alledged, or one teſtimony cited from the word of God himſelf, to the contrary, could not chuſe but overſway them all; inaſmuch as for them to be deceived it is not ſo impoſſible, as it is that demonſtrative reaſon or divine teſtimony ſhould deceive."

And again, "For men (ſays he) to be tied and led "by authority, as it were with a kind of captivity of "judgment, and though there be reaſon to the contra-

"ry,

" ry, not to liſten to it, but follow like beaſts the firſt " in the herd, this were brutiſh."

Again, " That the authority of men ſhould prevail " with men, either againſt or above reaſon, is no part " of our belief. Companies of learned men, though " they be never ſo great and reverend, are to yield unto " reaſon; the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by " the ſimplicity of the perſon which doth alledge it; but " being found to be ſound and good, the bare opinion " of men to the contrary muſt of neceſſity ſtoop and give " place." And this he delivers, not only as his own particular judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the judgment of the church of England.

I have produced theſe clear and poſitive teſtimonies of ſo learned and judicious a perſon, and of ſo great eſteem in our church, on purpoſe to prevent any miſapprehenſion, as if by this diſcourſe I intended to derogate from the authority of the church, and her juſt and reaſonable determinations, in things no ways contrary to plain reaſon or the word of God. And beyond this pitch no judicious Proteſtant, that I know of, ever ſtrained the authority of the church. I proceed now, in the

II. Second place, to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution from the objections to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable: As,

1. It may very ſpeciouſly be ſaid, that this does not ſeem modeſt for a man to ſet up his own private judgment againſt the general ſuffrage and vote. And it is very true, as I ſaid before, that about things indifferent a man ſhould not be ſtiff and ſingular; and in things doubtful and obſcure a man ſhould not be over-confident of his own judgment, and inſiſt peremptorily upon it, againſt the general opinion. But in things that are plain and evident, either from ſcripture or reaſon, it is neither immodeſty, nor a culpable ſingularity, for a man to ſtand alone in the defence of the truth; becauſe, in ſuch a caſe, a man does not oppoſe his own ſingle and private judgment to the judgment of many, but the common reaſon of mankind, and the judgment of God plainly declared in his word.

If the generality of men ſhould turn Atheiſts and infidels, and ſhould deny the being of God, or his providence;

dence; the immortality of mens ſouls, and the rewards and puniſhments of another world; or ſhould deny the truth of the goſpel, and of the Chriſtian religion: it would not certainly be any breach of modeſty for a man to appear ſingle, if no body elſe would ſtand by him, in the reſolute defence of theſe great truths.

In like manner, when a whole church, though never ſo large and numerous, ſhall conſpire together to corrupt the Chriſtian religion, ſo far as to impoſe upon mankind, under the name of Chriſtian doctrines and articles of faith, things plainly contrary to the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, and to the clear and expreſs word of God, why muſt a man needs be thought immodeſt, if he oppoſe ſuch groſs errors and corruptions of the Chriſtian doctrine? And what reaſon have the church of Rome to talk of modeſty in this caſe, when they themſelves have the face to impoſe upon mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man elſe ſees, as they do in their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; and to require of them to do what God hath expreſsly forbidden, as in the worſhip of images, beſides a great many other idolatrous practices of that church; to deny the people the free uſe of the holy ſcriptures, and the publick ſervice of God in a known tongue, contrary to the very end and deſign of all religion, and in affront to the common reaſon and liberty of mankind?

2. It is pretended, that it is more prudent for private perſons to err with the church, than to be ſo pertinacious in their own opinions. To which I anſwer, That it may indeed be pardonable in ſome caſes to be led into miſtake by the authority of thoſe to whoſe judgment and inſtruction we ought to pay a great deference and ſubmiſſion; provided always it be in things which are not plain and neceſſary: but ſurely it can never be prudent, to err with any number, how great ſoever, in matters of religion which are of moment, merely for numbers ſake. But to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any church whatſoever, is certainly damnable.

3. It is pretended yet further, that men ſhall ſooner be excuſed in following the church, than any particular man or ſect. To this I anſwer, That it is very true, if the matter be doubtful; and eſpecially if the probabili-

ties be equal, or near equal on both ſides: but, if the error be groſs and palpable, it will be no excuſe to have followed any number of men, or any church whatſoever. For here the competition is not between men and men, but between God and men; and, in this caſe, we muſt forſake all men to follow God and his truth. "Thou ſhalt in no ways follow a multitude in a known error," is a rule which in reaſon is of equal obligation with that divine law, *Thou ſhalt in no ways follow a multitude to do evil;* or rather is comprehended in it, becauſe to comply with a known error is certainly to *do evil.*

And this very objection the Jews made againſt our bleſſed Saviour, and the doctrine which he taught, that the guides and governors of the Jewiſh church did utterly differ from him, and were of a contrary mind: *Have any of the rulers* (ſay they) *believed on him?* What? will you be wiſer than your rulers and governors? what? follow the doctrine of one ſingle man againſt the unanimous judgment and ſentence of the great ſanhedrim, to whom the trial of doctrines and pretended prophets doth of right belong?

But, as plauſible as this objection may ſeem to be, it is to be conſidered, that, in a corrupt and degenerate church, the guides and rulers of it are commonly the worſt, and the moſt deeply engaged in the errors and corruptions of it. They brought them in at firſt; and their ſucceſſors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concerned to uphold and maintain them; and ſo long a preſcription gives a kind of ſacred ſtamp even to error, and an authority not to be oppoſed and reſiſted.

And thus it was in the corrupt ſtate of the Jewiſh church in our Saviour's time; and ſo likewiſe in that great degeneracy of the Chriſtian church, in the times of Popery, *their rulers made them to err;* inſomuch that when Martin Luther appeared in oppoſition to the errors and ſuperſtitions of that church, and was hard preſſed with this very objection which the Phariſees urged againſt our Saviour, he was forced to bolt out a kind of unmannerly truth, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendiſſimos:* "Religion (ſays he) is never "in greater hazard and worſe treated, than amongſt "the

" the Moſt Reverend ;" meaning the Pope and his Cardinals, and all the Romiſh hierarchy who had their dependence upon them.

4. It is objected, That as, on the one hand, there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the church, ſo, on the other hand, there is as great a danger of ſchiſm in forſaking the communion of the church upon pretence of errors and corruptions. Very true: but where great errors and corruptions are not only pretended, but are real and evident; and where our compliance with thoſe errors and corruptions is made a neceſſary condition of our communion with that church: in that caſe, the guilt of ſchiſm, how great a crime ſoever it be, doth not fall upon thoſe who forake the communion of that church, but upon thoſe who drive them out of it by the ſinful conditions which they impoſe upon them.

And this is truly the caſe between us and the church of Rome; as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all occaſions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themſelves of thoſe groſs errors and corruptions which have been charged upon them; and which they require of all their members, as neceſſary conditions of communion with them here, and of eternal ſalvation hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any that are contained in the Bible; as every body would ſee, if they durſt but let every body read it. The worſhip of images is there as plainly forbidden in the decalogue, as murder and adultery are. The communion in both kinds is as expreſs an inſtitution of our Saviour, as any in all the New Teſtament; and even as the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper itſelf: only that church pretends to a diſpenſing power, as a privilege inherent in their church, and inſeparable from it.

And, to add but one inſtance more, publick prayers and the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue, are as plainly and fully declared againſt by St. Paul, in a long chapter upon this ſingle argument, as any one thing in all his epiſtles.

Theſe things are plain and undeniable; and, being

ſo, are a full juſtification, not only of the church of England, in the reformation which ſhe thought fit to make within herſelf, from the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; but likewiſe of particular perſons, who have at any time, for the ſame reaſons, withdrawn themſelves from her communion, in any of the Popiſh countries; yea though that ſingle perſon ſhould happen to be in thoſe circumſtances, that he could not have the opportunity of holding communion with any other church that was free from thoſe errors and corruptions, and which did not impoſe them as neceſſary conditions of communion.

For if any church fall off to idolatry, every good Chriſtian not only may, but ought to forſake her communion; and ought rather to ſtand ſingle and alone in the profeſſion of the pure and true religion, than to continue in the communion of a corrupt and idolatrous church.

I know, that ſome men are ſo fond of the name of a church, that they can very hardly believe, that any thing which bears that glorious title can miſcarry, or do any thing ſo much amiſs, as to give juſt occaſion to any of her members to break off from her communion. What? the church err? That is ſuch an abſurdity as is by many thought ſufficient to put any objection out of countenance. That the whole church, that is, that all the Chriſtians in the world, ſhould at any time fall off to idolatry, and into errors and practices directly contrary to the Chriſtian doctrine revealed in the holy ſcriptures, is on all hands, I think, denied: but that any particular church may fall into ſuch errors and practices, is, I think, as univerſally granted; only in this caſe they demand to have the Roman Catholick church excepted. And why, I pray? Becauſe though the Roman church is a particular church, it is alſo the univerſal church. If this can be, and good ſenſe can be made of a particular univerſal church, then the Roman church may demand this high privilege, of being exempted from the fate of all other churches; but if the Roman Catholick, that is, a particular univerſal church, be a groſs and palpable contradiction, then it is plain, that the church of Rome hath

no

no more pretence to this privilege, than any other particular church whatſoever.

And, which is yet more, ſome men talk of theſe matters at that rate, as if a man who thought himſelf obliged to quit the communion of the church of Rome, ſhould happen to be in thoſe circumſtances that he had no opportunity of joining himſelf to any other communion, he ought in that caſe to give over all thoughts of religion, and not be ſo conceited and preſumptuous as to think of going to heaven alone by himſelf.

It is without doubt a very great ſin, to deſpiſe the communion of the church, or to break off from it, ſo long as we can continue in it without ſin: but if things ſhould once come to that paſs, that we muſt either diſobey God for company, or ſtand alone in our obedience to him, we ought moſt certainly to obey God, whatever comes of it; and to profeſs his truth, whether any body elſe will join with us in that profeſſion or not.

And they who ſpeak otherwiſe, condemn the whole reformation; and do in effect ſay, that Martin Luther had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the church of Rome, if no body elſe would have joined with him in that honeſt deſign. And yet, if it had been ſo, I hope God would have given him the grace and courage to have ſtood alone in ſo good and glorious a cauſe, and to have laid down his life for it.

And for any man to be of another opinion, is juſt as if a man, upon great deliberation, ſhould chuſe rather to be drowned, than to be ſaved either by a plank or a ſmall boat; or to be carried into the harbour any other way, than in a great ſhip of ſo many hundred tuns.

In ſhort, a good man muſt reſolve to obey God, and to profeſs his truth, though all the world ſhould happen to do otherwiſe. Chriſt hath promiſed to preſerve his church to the end of the world; that is, he hath engaged his word, that he will take care that there ſhall always be, in ſome part of the world or other, ſome perſons that ſhall make a ſincere profeſſion of his true religion.

But he hath no where promiſed to preſerve any one

part of his church from ſuch errors and corruptions, as may oblige all good men to quit the communion of that part; yea, though when they have done ſo, they may not know whither to reſort for actual communion with any other ſound part of the Chriſtian church: as it happened to ſome particular perſons, during the reign and rage of Popery in theſe Weſtern parts of the Chriſtian church.

The reſult from all this diſcourſe is, to confirm and eſtabliſh us all, in this *hour of temptation*, and of *the powers of darkneſs*, in the well-grounded belief of the neceſſity and juſtice of our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the Roman church: and to engage us to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*: and not only to profeſs and promiſe, as Peter did to our Lord, *Though all men forſake thee, yet will not I*; but, if there ſhould be occaſion, to perform and make good this promiſe with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of life itſelf; and whatever trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that, whatever others do, *we will ſerve the Lord.*

I will conclude my diſcourſe upon this firſt particular in the text, with the exhortation of St. Paul to the Philippians, chap. i. 27. 28. *Only let your converſation be as it becometh the goſpel of Chriſt. Stand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel; in nothing terrified by your adverſaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of ſalvation, and that of God.*

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to the firſt thing in the text; namely, the pious reſolution of Joſhua, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of God's true religion: *Chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve: but as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to ſpeak to from this text; namely, the pious care of a good father and maſter of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the religion and worſhip of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we*

we will ſerve the Lord. But this I ſhall not now enter upon; but defer it to ſome other opportunity. *Conſider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things.*

SERMON L.

Concerning family-religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, July 13. 1684.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

——*But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

I Shall now proceed to the *Second* point contained in the text, namely,

The pious care of a good maſter and father of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the worſhip and ſervice of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.*

And this is the more neceſſary to be ſpoken to, becauſe it is a great and very eſſential part of religion, but ſtrangely overlooked and neglected in this looſe and degenerate age in which we live. It is a great part of religion; for next to our perſonal homage and ſervice to almighty God, and the care of our own ſouls, it is incumbent upon us to make thoſe who are under our charge, and ſubject to our authority, God's ſubjects, and his children and ſervants; which is a much more honourable and happy relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our children are a natural part of ourſelves, and the reſt of our family are a civil and political part; and not only we ourſelves, but all that we have, and that belongs to us, is God's, and ought to be devoted to his ſervice. And they that have the true fear of God themſelves, will be

be careful to teach it to others; to thoſe eſpecially who are under their more immediate care and inſtruction. And therefore God had ſo great a confidence concerning Abraham as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that, being ſo very good a man himſelf, he would not fail in ſo great and neceſſary a part of his duty: *For I know him,* (ſays God of him), *that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment.* God paſſeth his word for him, that he would not only take care to inſtruct his children, and the reſt of his numerous family, in the true religion; but that he would likewiſe lay a ſtrict charge upon them to propagate and tranſmit it to their poſterity.

And this certainly is the duty of all fathers and maſters of families; and an eſſential part of religion, next to ſerving God in our own perſons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the ſame. For every man muſt not only give an account of himſelf to God, but of thoſe likewiſe that are committed to his charge, that they do not miſcarry through his neglect.

In ſpeaking of this great and neceſſary duty, I ſhall do theſe four things.

1. I ſhall ſhew wherein it doth conſiſt.

2. I ſhall conſider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of intereſt.

3. I ſhall inquire into the cauſes of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety amongſt us.

4. As a motive and argument to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this duty, I ſhall repreſent to you the pernicious conſequences of the neglect of it, both with regard to ourſelves, and to the publick. In all which I ſhall be very brief, becauſe things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I ſhall ſhew wherein the practice of this duty doth conſiſt. And in this I am ſure there is no need to be long, becauſe this duty is much better known than practiſed. The principal parts of it are theſe following.

1. By ſetting up the conſtant worſhip of God in our families; by daily prayers to God every morning and evening, and by reading ſome portion of the holy ſcriptures

ptures at thoſe times, eſpecially out of the Pſalms of David, and the New Teſtament. And this is ſo neceſſary to keep alive and to maintain a ſenſe of God and religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected, I do not ſee how any family can in reaſon be eſteemed a family of Chriſtians, or indeed to have any religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent helps to this purpoſe for thoſe that ſtand in need of them, as I think moſt families do for the due and decent diſcharge of this ſolemn duty of prayer; I ſay, there are excellent helps to this purpoſe in the ſeveral books of devotion calculated for the private uſe of families, as well as for ſecret prayer in our cloſets.

So that, beſides the reading of the holy ſcriptures, which are the great fountains of divine truth, we may do well likewiſe to add to theſe, other pious and profitable books, which, by their plainneſs, are fitted for the inſtruction of all capacities in the moſt neceſſary points of belief and practice; of which ſort, God be thanked, there is an abundant ſtore: but none that I think is more fitted for general and conſtant uſe, than that excellent book ſo well known by the title of *The whole duty of man*; becauſe it is conveniently divided into parts or ſections; one of which may be read in the family at any time when there is leiſure for it, but more eſpecially on the Lord's day, when the whole family may the more eaſily be brought and kept together, and have the opportunity to attend upon theſe things without diſtraction.

And, which I muſt by no means omit, becauſe it is in many families already gone, and in others going out of faſhion; I mean, a ſolemn acknowledgment of the providence of God, by begging his bleſſing at our meals upon his good creatures provided for our uſe, and by returning thanks to him for the benefit and refreſhment of them: this being a piece of natural religion owned and practiſed in all ages, and in moſt places of the world, but never ſo ſhamefully and ſcandalouſly neglected, and I fear by many ſlighted and deſpiſed, as it is amongſt us at this day; and moſt neglected where there is greateſt reaſon for the doing of it, I mean, at the moſt plentiful tables, and among thoſe of higheſt quality: as if great perſons were aſhamed, or thought ſcorn to own from whence

whence theſe bleſſings come; like the nation of the Jews, of whom God complains in the Prophet, Hoſ. ii. 8. *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her ſilver and gold. She did not know;* that is, ſhe would not acknowledge from whoſe bounty all theſe bleſſings came: or as if the poor were obliged to thank God for a little, but thoſe who are fed to the full, and whoſe cups overflow, ſo that they are almoſt every day ſurfeited of plenty, were not at leaſt equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the great giver of all good things; and to implore his bounty and bleſſing, upon whom *the eyes of all do wait*, that *he may give them their meat in due ſeaſon.*

O crooked and perverſe generation! Do you thus reaſon? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, fooliſh and unwiſe?* This is a very ſad and broad ſign of the prevalency of Atheiſm and infidelity among us, when ſo natural and ſo reaſonable a piece of religion, ſo meet and equal an acknowledgment of the conſtant and daily care and providence of almighty God towards us begins to grow out of date and uſe, in a nation profeſſing religion, and the belief of the being and providence of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his bleſſings from us, when we deny him this juſt and eaſy tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving? *Shall not God viſit for this* horrible ingratitude? *and ſhall not his ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this? Hear, O heavens, and be horribly aſtoniſhed at this!* I hope it cannot be thought miſbecoming the meaneſt of God's miniſters, in a matter wherein the honour of God is ſo nearly concerned, to reprove, even in the higheſt and greateſt of the ſons of men, ſo ſhameful and heinous a fault, with a proportionable vehemence and ſeverity.

2. Another, and that alſo a very conſiderable part of this duty, conſiſts in inſtructing thoſe committed to our charge in the fundamental principles, and in the careful practice of the neceſſary duties of religion; inſtilling theſe into children in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept, here a little and there a little;* and into thoſe that are more grown up, by proper and ſuitable means of inſtruction, and by furniſhing them with ſuch books as are

moſt

moſt proper to teach them thoſe things in religion which are moſt neceſſary by all to be believed and practiſed.

And in order hereunto, we ſhould take care that thoſe under our charge, our children and ſervants, ſhould be taught to read; becauſe this will make the buſineſs of inſtruction much eaſier: ſo that, if they are diligent, and well diſpoſed, they may, after having been taught the firſt principles of religion, by reading the holy ſcriptures, and other good books, greatly improve themſelves, ſo as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their miniſters.

And in this work of inſtruction, our great care ſhould be, to plant thoſe principles of religion in our children and ſervants which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary, and are like to have the greateſt and moſt laſting influence upon their whole lives: As, right and worthy apprehenſions of God, eſpecially of his infinite goodneſs, and that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;* and a lively ſenſe alſo of the great evil and danger of ſin; a firm belief of the immortality of our ſouls, and of the unſpeakable and endleſs rewards and puniſhments of another world. If theſe principles once take root, they will ſpread ſtrangely, and probably ſtick by them, and continue with them all their days.

Whereas, if we plant in them doubtful doctrines and opinions, and inculcate upon them the notions of a ſect, and the jargon of a party, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we muſt expect that our harveſt will be anſwerable to our huſbandry: *We have ſown the wind, and ſhall reap the whirlwind.* But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly and fully in the enſuing ſermons concerning the good education of children.

And this work of inſtruction of thoſe that are under our charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other times, ſo it is more peculiarly ſeaſonable on the Lord's day; which ought to be employed by us to religious purpoſes, and in the exerciſes of piety and devotion, chiefly in the publick worſhip and ſervice of God; upon which we ſhould take care, that our children and ſervants ſhould diligently and devoutly attend: becauſe there God affords the means which he hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of piety and goodneſs, and to which he

he hath promiſed a more eſpecial bleſſing; there they will have the opportunity of joining in the publick prayers of God's church, and of ſharing in the unſpeakable benefit and advantage of them; and there they will alſo have the advantage of being inſtructed by the miniſters of God in the doctrine of ſalvation, and the way to eternal life, and of being powerfully incited to the practice of piety and virtue.

There likewiſe they will be invited to the Lord's table, to participate of the holy ſacrament of Chriſt's moſt bleſſed body and blood; which being the moſt ſolemn inſtitution of the Chriſtian religion, the frequent participation whereof is, by our bleſſed Lord, in remembrance of his dying love, injoined upon all Chriſtians, we ought to take a very particular care, that thoſe who are under our charge, ſo ſoon as they are capable of it, be duly inſtructed and prepared for it; that ſo, as often as opportunity is offered for it, they may be preſent at this holy action, and partake of the ineſtimable benefits and comforts of it.

And when the publick worſhip of that day is over, our families ſhould be inſtructed at home, by having the ſcriptures and other good books read to them: and care likewiſe ſhould be taken, that they do this themſelves; this being the chief opportunity that moſt of them, eſpecially thoſe that are ſervants, have of minding the buſineſs of religion, and thinking ſeriouſly of another world.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great conſequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of religion in the world, that this day be religiouſly obſerved, and ſpent as much as may be in the exerciſes of piety, and in the care of our ſouls. For ſurely every one that hath a true ſenſe of religion, will grant, that it is neceſſary that ſome time ſhould be ſolemnly ſet apart for this purpoſe, which is of all other our greateſt concernment. And they who neglect this ſo proper ſeaſon and opportunity, will hardly find any other time for it; eſpecially thoſe who are under the government and command of others, as children and ſervants, who are ſeldom upon any other day allowed to be ſo much maſters of their time as upon this day.

3. I add further, as a conſiderable part of the duty of parents

parents and masters of families, if they be desirous to have their children and servants religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to heaven, that they do not only allow them time and opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every day, but more especially on the Lord's day, morning and evening, to pray to God for the forgiveness of their sins, and for his mercy and blessing upon them; and likewise to praise him for all his favours and benefits conferred upon them from day to day.

And, in order to this, they ought to take care, that their children and servants be furnished with such short forms of prayer and praise as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these duties, especially at first, without some helps of this kind.

4. and lastly, Another principal part of this duty consists in giving good example to our families. This was David's resolution, Psal. ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be exemplary to thy family in the best things; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober, and prudent, and unblameable conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our care and authority good, is, to be good ourselves, and, by our good example, to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best instructions will signify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own example and practice. The want of this will weaken the authority of all our good counsel, and very little reverence and obedience will be paid to it. The precepts and admonitions of a very good man have in them a great power of persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and to inflame others to *go and do likewise*: but the good instructions of a bad man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that counsel, which they see he that

gives it does not think fit to take himſelf. But of this likewiſe I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully in the following diſcourſes, concerning the good education of children. And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken of the firſt thing which I propoſed, namely, Wherein the the practice of this duty doth conſiſt. I proceed to the ſecond, namely,

II. To conſider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of intereſt.

1. In point of duty. All authority over others is a talent intruſted with us by God for the benefit and good of others, and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it, and make uſe of it to that end. We are obliged, by all lawful means, to provide for the temporal welfare of our family, to feed and clothe their bodies, and to give them a comfortable ſubſiſtence here in the world: and ſurely much more are we obliged to take care of their ſouls, and to conſult their eternal happineſs in another life; in compariſon of which all temporal concernments and conſiderations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a father or maſter, to ſuffer a child to ſtarve for want of the neceſſaries of life, food and raiment; and all the world would cry ſhame upon them for it: but how much greater cruelty muſt it in reaſon be thought, to let an immortal ſoul, and one *for whom Chriſt died*, periſh for want of knowledge and neceſſary inſtruction for the attaining of eternal ſalvation?

The Apoſtle St. Paul thinks no words bad enough for thoſe who neglect the temporal welfare of their families: *He that provideth not* (ſaith he) *for his own, eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe, hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel;* that is, he does not deſerve the name of a Chriſtian, who neglects a duty to which, from the plain dictates of nature, a Heathen thinks himſelf obliged. What then ſhall be ſaid for them who take no care to provide for the everlaſting happineſs, and to prevent the eternal miſery and ruin of thoſe who are ſo immediately under their charge, and ſo very nearly related to them?

We are obliged to procure the happineſs of our children, not only by the laws of Chriſtianity, but likewiſe by all the natural bonds of duty and affection. For

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our children are a part of ourſelves; and, if they periſh by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual wound and ſting to us: their blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lie at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewiſe in juſtice, and by way of reparation, to take all poſſible care of their happineſs: for we have conveyed a ſad inheritance to them, in thoſe corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us; and therefore we ſhould, with the greateſt care and diligence, endeavour to rectify their perverſe natures, and to cure thoſe curſed diſpoſitions to evil which we have tranſmitted to them. And ſince God hath been pleaſed in ſo much mercy to provide, by the abundant grace of the goſpel, ſo powerful a remedy for this hereditary diſeaſe of our corrupt and degenerate nature, we ſhould do what in us lies, that they may partake of the bleſſing and benefit of it.

And as to other members of our family, whether they be ſervants, or other relations, of whom we have taken the charge, common humanity will oblige us to be concerned for their happineſs, as they are men, and of the ſame nature with ourſelves: and charity likewiſe, as they are Chriſtians, and baptized into the ſame faith, and capable of the ſame common ſalvation, does yet more ſtrictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; eſpecially ſince they are committed to our care, and for that reaſon we muſt expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our obligation in point of duty is very clear and ſtrong; and if we be remiſs and negligent in the diſcharge of it, we can never anſwer it either to God or to our own conſciences: which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it, to the ſerious conſideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conſcientious performance of it.

2. We are hereto likewiſe obliged in point of intereſt; becauſe it is really for our ſervice and advantage, that thoſe that belong to us ſhould ſerve and fear God; religion being the beſt and ſureſt foundation of the duties of all relations, and the beſt caution and ſecurity for the true diſcharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient children, dili-

gent and faithful ſervants? nothing will ſo effectually oblige them to be ſo, as the fear of God and the principles of religion firmly ſettled and rooted in them. Abraham, who by the teſtimony of God himſelf was ſo eminent an example in this kind, both of a good father, and a good maſter of his family, found the good ſucceſs of his religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his ſon Iſaac, and his chief ſervant and ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus.

What an unexampled inſtance of the moſt profound reſpect and obedience to the commands of his father did Iſaac give, when, without the leaſt murmuring or reluctancy, he ſubmitted to be bound, and laid upon the altar, and to have been ſlain for a ſacrifice, if God had not, by an angel ſent on purpoſe, interpoſed to prevent it?

What an admirable ſervant to Abraham was the ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus? How diligent and faithful was he in his maſter's ſervice? ſo that he truſted him in his greateſt concernments, and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great affair of the marriage of his ſon Iſaac, what pains did he take, what prudence did he uſe, what fidelity did he ſhew, in the diſcharge of that great truſt, giving himſelf no reſt till he had accompliſhed the buſineſs he was ſent about? God ſeems purpoſely to have left theſe two inſtances upon record in ſcripture, to encourage fathers and maſters of families to a religious care of their children and ſervants.

And to ſhew the power of religion to oblige men to their duty, I will add but one inſtance more. How did the fear of God ſecure Joſeph's fidelity to his maſter, in the caſe of a very great and violent temptation? When there was nothing elſe to reſtrain him from ſo lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was ſo powerfully tempted, the conſideration of the great truſt his maſter repoſed in him, and the ſenſe of his duty to him, but, above all, the fear of God, preſerved him from conſenting to ſo vile and wicked an action: *How can I* (ſays he) *do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?*

So that, in prudence, and from a wiſe conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound

dound to us, we ought, with the greateſt care, to inſtil the principles of religion into thoſe that belong to us. For if the ſeeds of true piety be ſown in them, we ſhall reap the fruits of it; and if this be neglected, we ſhall certainly find the miſchief and inconvenience of it. If our children and ſervants be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they ſhould reverence and regard us? At leaſt we can have no ſure hold of them: for nothing but religion lays an obligation upon conſcience; nor is there any other certain bond of duty, and obedience, and fidelity. Men will break looſe from all other ties, when a fit occaſion and a fair opportunity doth ſtrongly tempt them. And as religion is neceſſary to procure the favour of God, and all the comfort and happineſs which that brings along with it; ſo it is neceſſary likewiſe to ſecure the mutual duties and offices of men to one another. I proceed to the third thing which I propoſed, namely,

III. To inquire into the cauſes of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety among us. And this may in part be aſcribed to our civil confuſions and diſtractions, but chiefly to our diſſenſions and differences in religion; which have not only divided and ſcattered our parochial churches and congregations, but have entered likewiſe into our families, and made great diſturbances and diſorders there.

1. This may in good part be aſcribed to our civil confuſions and diſtractions, which for the time do lay all laws aſleep; and do not only occaſion a general licentiouſneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners, but have uſually a proportionable bad influence upon the order and government of families, by weakening the authority of thoſe that govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater licence to thoſe that ſhould be governed: for when publick laws loſe their authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the ſtrict rules and order of families; which, after great and long diſorder, are very hard to be retrieved and recovered.

2. This great neglect and decay of religious order in families, is chiefly owing to our diſſenſions and differences in religion; upon occaſion whereof, many, under the

pretence of conſcience, have broke looſe into a boundleſs liberty. So that, among the manifold ill conſequences of our diviſions in religion, this is none of the leaſt, that the religious order of families hath been in a great meaſure broken and diſſolved. Some will not meet at the ſame prayers in the family, nor go to the ſame church and place of publick worſhip; and, upon that pretence, take the liberty to do what they pleaſe, and, under colour of ſerving God in a different way according to their conſciences, do either wholly, or in great meaſure, neglect the worſhip of God: nay, it is well if they do not at that time haunt and frequent places of debauchery and lewdneſs; which they may ſafely do, being from under the eye of their parents and maſters. However, by this means, it becomes impoſſible for the moſt careful maſters of families, to take an account of thoſe under their charge, how they ſpend their time on the Lord's day, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of religion.

And this methinks is ſo great and ſenſible an inconvenience, and hath had ſuch diſmal effects in many families, as ought effectually to convince us of the neceſſity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion; and to put us in mind of thoſe happy days when God was ſerved in one way, and whole families went to the houſe of God in companies; and fathers and maſters had their children and ſervants continually under their eye, and they were all united in their worſhip and devotion, both in their own houſes and in the houſe of God; and by this means the work of religious education and inſtruction was effectually carried on, and a ſteddy authority and decent order was maintained in families; men were edified and built up in religion, and *God in all things was glorified.*

And we may aſſure ourſelves, that till we are better agreed in matters of religion, and our unhappy and childiſh differences are laid aſide, and till the publick and unanimous worſhip of God do in ſome meaſure recover its reputation; the good order and government of families, as to the great ends of religion, is never likely to obtain and to have any conſiderable effect: which, I hope, will make all men who heartily love God and religion,

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to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these differences; that in our private families, as well as in the publick assemblies of the church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I beseech you therefore, *brethren*, (as St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10.), *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*; that is, so far as is necessary to the *keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, and to prevent divisions and separations among Christians. I proceed to the fourth and last thing I proposed, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,

IV. The very mischievous and fatal consequences of the neglect of this duty, both to the publick, and to ourselves.

1. To the publick. Families are the first seminaries of religion; and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for publick teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our children and servants at home, to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at church, is like an error in the first concoction, which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that, in this first neglect, the foundation of an infinite mischief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of religion, how can it reasonably be expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all relations; undutiful children, slothful and unfaithful servants, scandalous members of the church, unprofitable to the commonwealth, disobedient to governors both ecclesiastical and civil; and, in a word, burdens of the earth, and so many plagues of human society: and this evil, if no remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread itself farther in every age, till impiety and wickedness, infidelity and profaneness

profaneneſs have over-run all, and the world be ripe for its final ruin: juſt as it was before the deſtruction of the old world, when *the wickedneſs of man was great upon the earth*, and *all fleſh had corrupted their way*, then *the flood came, and ſwept them all away*.

2. The conſequences of this neglect will likewiſe be very diſmal to ourſelves. We ſhall firſt of all others feel the inconvenience, as we had the greateſt ſhare in the guilt of it. We can have no manner of ſecurity of the duty and fidelity of thoſe of our family to us, if they have no ſenſe of religion, no fear of God before their eyes. If we have taken no care to inſtruct them in their duty to God, it is no ways probable that they will make conſcience of their duty to us.

So that we ſhall have the firſt ill conſequences of their miſcarriage, beſides the ſhame and ſorrow of it: and not only ſo, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great meaſure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our ſcore in the judgment of the great day. It ought to make us tremble, to think with what bitterneſs and rage our children and ſervants will then fly in our faces, for having been the cauſe of their eternal ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In that day, next to God and our own conſciences, our moſt terrible accuſers will be thoſe of our own houſe, nay thoſe that come out of our own bowels, and were not only part of our family, but even of ourſelves. But this alſo I ſhall have a proper occaſion to proſecute more fully in the following diſcourſes concerning the education of children, to which I refer it.

Upon all theſe conſiderations, and many more that might be urged upon us, we ſhould take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that *we and OUR HOUSES will ſerve the Lord*; and that, through God's grace, we will do all that in us lies, by our future care and diligence, to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I ſhall only add this one conſideration more to all that I have already mentioned. If children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiouſly ordered, what a happy and delightful place, what a paradiſe would this world be, in compariſon of what now it is?

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, that theſe things which I have with ſo much plainneſs and faithfulneſs laid before you, may ſink into your hearts before it be too late, and whilſt the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect, and repent of it, when the thing will be paſt remedy, and there will be no place for repentance. *But I hope better things of you, brethren, and things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak.*

SERMON LI.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

I Have on purpoſe choſen this text for the ſubject of a preparatory diſcourſe, in order to the reviving of that ſo ſhamefully neglected, and yet moſt uſeful and neceſſary duty of catechizing children and young perſons; but I ſhall extend it to the conſideration of the education of children in general, as a matter of the greateſt conſequence, both to religion and the publick welfare.

For we who are the miniſters of God, ought not only to inſtruct thoſe who are committed to our charge in the common duties of Chriſtianity, ſuch as belong to all Chriſtians; but likewiſe in all the particular duties which the ſeveral relations in which they ſtand to one another do reſpectively require and call for from them.

And amongſt all theſe, I know none that is of greater concernment to religion, and to the good order of the world, than the careful education of children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires

quires a more prudent, and diligent, and conſtant application of our beſt care and endeavour.

It is a known ſaying of Melanćthon, that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere:* "to bear and bring forth children, to "inſtruct and bring them up to be men, and to go-"vern them when they arrive at man's eſtate." The inſtruction and good education of children is none of the leaſt difficult of theſe. For to do it to the beſt advantage, does not only require great ſagacity to diſcern their particular diſpoſition and temper, but great diſcretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewiſe continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wiſdom and induſtry to advance a conſiderable eſtate; much art, and contrivance, and pains, to raiſe a great and regular building: but the greateſt and nobleſt work in the world, and an effect of the greateſt prudence and care, is, to rear and build up a man, and to form and faſhion him to piety and juſtice, and temperance, and all kind of honeſt and worthy actions. Now, the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of children, that it may riſe and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wiſe man here in the text, *Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained theſe two things.

1. The duty of parents, and inſtructors of children: *Train up a child*, &c. By *childhood* here, I underſtand the age of perſons from their birth; but more eſpecially from their firſt capacity of inſtruction, till they arrive at the ſtate and age which next ſucceeds childhood, and which we call *youth;* and which is the proper ſeaſon for confirmation. For when children have been well catechized and inſtructed in religion, then is the fitteſt time for them to take upon themſelves, and in their own perſons, to confirm that ſolemn vow, which by their ſureties they made at their baptiſm.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; that is, in the courſe of life that he ought to lead; inſtruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty

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to God and men, which he ought to obſerve and perform all the days of his life.

2. Here is the conſequent fruit and benefit of good education: *And when he is old, he will not depart from it.* This we are to underſtand according to the moral probability of things: not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good education of a child; but that this very frequently is, and may probably be preſumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent education. Solomon means, that from the very nature of the thing, this is the moſt hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For, as Ariſtotle truly obſerves, moral ſayings and proverbial ſpeeches are to be underſtood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ; that is, to be uſually and for the moſt part true. And though there may be ſeveral exceptions made, and inſtances given to the contrary; yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them. But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, becauſe it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphoriſm or proverb of Solomon in the text; and ſo likewiſe are moſt of the wiſe ſayings of this book of the Proverbs, as alſo of Eccleſiaſtes. And we do greatly miſtake the deſign and meaning of them, whenever we go about to exact them to a more ſtrict and rigorous truth, and ſhall upon due conſideration find it impoſſible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully compriſed in the following propoſition:

That the careful, and prudent, and religious education of children hath for the moſt part a very good influence upon the whole courſe of their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I deſign, by God's aſſiſtance, to reduce my diſcourſe to theſe five heads.

1. I ſhall ſhew more generally wherein the good education of children doth conſiſt; and ſeverally conſider the principal parts of it.

2. I ſhall give ſome more particular directions for the management of this work, in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual for its end.

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3. I ſhall take notice of ſome of the common and more remarkable miſcarriages in the performance of this duty.

4. I ſhall endeavour to make out the truth of this propoſition, by ſhewing how the good education of children comes to be of ſo great advantage, and to have ſo powerful and laſting an influence upon their whole lives.

5. and laſtly, I ſhall, by the moſt powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to ſtir up and perſuade thoſe whoſe duty this is, to diſcharge it with great care and conſcience.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew more generally wherein the good education of children doth conſiſt; and ſeverally conſider the principal parts of it. And under this head I ſhall comprehend promiſcuouſly the duty of parents; and, in caſe of their death, of guardians; and of godfathers and godmothers; though this for the moſt part ſignifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them; becauſe the children for whom they are ſureties, are ſeldom under their power: and the duty likewiſe of thoſe who are the teachers and inſtructers of them: and the duty alſo of maſters of families towards ſervants in their childhood and younger years: and laſtly the duty of miniſters, under whoſe parochial care and inſpection children are, as members of the families committed to their charge: I ſay, under this head I ſhall comprehend the duties of all theſe reſpectively, according to the ſeveral obligations which lie upon each of them in their ſeveral relations to them. And I ſhall reduce them to theſe eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the education of children doth conſiſt.

1. In the tender and careful nurſing of them.

2. In bringing them to be baptized, and admitted members of Chriſt's church, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

3. In a due care to inform and inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their duty to God and to their neighbour.

4. And

4. And more eſpecially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

5. In giving them good example.

6. In wiſe reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable reproof and correction.

7. In bringing them to be publickly catechized by the miniſter, in order to confirmation.

8. In bringing them to the Biſhop, to be ſolemnly confirmed; by their taking upon themſelves the vow which, by their ſureties, they entered into at their baptiſm.

I. In the tender and careful nurſing of children. I mention this firſt, becauſe it is the firſt and moſt natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their children: and this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and tenderneſs, nature, which is our ſureſt guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones: and there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reaſon, than to neglect a duty, to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking inſtinct. So that it is ſuch a duty, as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature; and from which nothing can excuſe, but diſability, or ſickneſs, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interpoſition of the father's authority, or ſome very extraordinary and publick neceſſity.

This, I foreſee, will ſeem a very hard ſaying to nice and delicate mothers, who prefer their own eaſe and pleaſure to the fruit of their own bodies: but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myſelf obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be ſo faithful as to tell them, that this is a natural duty; and becauſe it is ſo, of a more neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation than any poſitive precept of revealed religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying ſins of this age and nation; and which, as much as any ſin whatſoever, is evidently a puniſhment to itſelf, in the palpable ill effects and conſequences of it: which I ſhall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to repreſent; that, if it be poſſible, we may in this firſt

point of education, ſo fundamental and neceſſary to the happineſs both of parents and children, and conſequently to the publick good of human ſociety, be brought to comply with the unerring inſtinct of nature, and with the plain dictate of the common reaſon of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations.

1. The neglect of this duty is a ſort of expoſing of children; eſpecially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always expoſeth them to manifeſt inconvenience, and ſometimes to great danger; even to that degree, as, in the conſequence of it, is but little better than the laying a child in the ſtreets, and leaving it to the care and compaſſion of a pariſh. There are two very viſible inconveniences which do commonly attend it.

1*ſt*, Strange milk; which is often very diſagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be ſure ſucks in the natural infirmities of the nurſe, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular paſſions, which many times ſtick by the child for a long time after; and, which is worſe than all this, it ſometimes happens, that ſome ſecret diſeaſe of the nurſe is conveyed to the child.

2*dly*, A ſhameful and dangerous neglect of the child, eſpecially by ſuch nurſes as make a trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city; who, after they have made their firſt and main advantage of the child, by the exceſſive, not to ſay extravagant vails which uſually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at chriſtenings; and then, by the ſtrait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nurſing and keeping of the child, are often tempted, not to ſay worſe, to a great neglect of the child; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, ſets the nurſe at liberty to make a new advantage, by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwiſe expected, than that a nurſe, who by this courſe is firſt made to be unnatural to her own child, ſhould have no great care and tenderneſs for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very ſad obſervation made by thoſe who have had the opportunity to know it, that, in ſeveral of the

the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nurſing children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of theſe children lives out the year. And this ſurely is a danger which natural affection, as well as duty, does oblige parents to take all poſſible care to prevent.

2. This courſe doth moſt certainly tend very much to the eſtranging and weakening of natural affection on both ſides; I mean, both on the part of the mother, and of the child. The pains of nurſing, as well as of bearing children, doth inſenſibly create a ſtrange tenderneſs of affection and care in the mother. *Can a woman* (ſays God) *forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb?* Iſ. xlix. 15. *Can a woman?* that is, a mother, not a nurſe; for the *ſucking child* is ſaid to be *the ſon of her womb.* God ſpeaks of this as a thing next to impoſſible.

And this likewiſe is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from the mother to the nurſe, and many times continues to be ſo for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree, as if the nurſe were the true mother, and the true mother a mere ſtranger. So that by this means natural affection muſt be extremely weakened: which is great pity; becauſe, when it is kept up in its full ſtrength, it often proves one of the beſt ſecurities of the duty of a child.

But becauſe this ſevere doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I muſt take the more care to guard it againſt the objections which will be made to it. Thoſe from natural diſability, or ſickneſs; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interpoſition of the father's authority, or from plain neceſſity; or if there be any other that have an equal reaſon with theſe, I have prevented already, by allowing them to be juſt and reaſonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to ſhake off our duty.

But there are, beſides theſe, two objections which indeed are real, but yet ſeem to have too great a weight with thoſe who would fain decline this duty; and are by no means ſufficient to excuſe mothers, no not thoſe of the higheſt rank and quality, from the natural obligation

of it. And they are theſe; the manifeſt trouble, and the manifold reſtraints which the careful diſcharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon thoſe who ſubmit themſelves to it.

1. For the trouble of it; I have only this to ſay, and I think no more need to be ſaid about it, that no body is diſcharged from any duty by reaſon of the trouble which neceſſarily attends it, and is inſeparable from it; ſince God who made it a duty, foreſaw the trouble of it when he made it ſo.

2. As to the manifold reſtraints which it lays upon mothers; this will beſt be anſwered by conſidering of what nature theſe reſtraints are. And they are chiefly in theſe and the like inſtances. This duty reſtrains mothers from ſpending their morning and their money in curious and coſtly dreſſing; from miſpending the reſt of the day in formal, and for the moſt part impertinent viſits; and in ſeeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be ſeen or heard by modeſt perſons, and thoſe who pretend to religion and virtue, as I hope all Chriſtians do, eſpecially perſons of higher rank and quality: and it reſtrains them likewiſe from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in revelling till paſt midnight, I am loth to ſay how much.

Theſe are thoſe terrible reſtraints which this natural duty, of mothers nurſing their children, lays upon them. Now, I cannot but think all theſe to be very happy reſtraints: happy ſurely for the child, and in many reſpects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order; but happieſt of all for the mother, who does herein not only diſcharge a great and neceſſary duty, but is hereby alſo hindered from running into many great faults; which, before they will be forgiven, muſt coſt her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unuſual argument, than will pleaſe the preſent age. But I hope poſterity will be ſo wiſe, as to conſider it, and lay it to heart: for I am greatly afraid, that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good education of children doth conſiſt, namely,

II. In

II. In bringing them to be baptized, and admitted members of Chriſt's church, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the national church of which the parents are members; I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publickly initiated, and ſolemnly admitted by baptiſm. And this the rules of the church of England do ſtrictly injoin, unleſs the child be in danger of death; and in that caſe only it is allowed to adminiſter baptiſm privately, and in a ſummary way, without performing the whole office. But then, if the child live, it is ordered that it ſhall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be ſolemnly performed.

I know that of late years, ſince our unhappy confuſions, this ſacrament hath very frequently been adminiſtered in private: and miniſters have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater miſchief of ſeparation, neceſſitated to comply with the obſtinacy of the greater and more powerful of their pariſhioners; who, for their eaſe or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous chriſtening, will either have their children baptized at home by their miniſter; or, if he refuſe, will get ſome other miniſter to do it: which is very irregular.

Now, I would intreat ſuch perſons calmly to conſider how contrary to reaſon, and to the plain deſign of the inſtitution of this ſacrament, this perverſe cuſtom, and their obſtinate reſolution in it, is. For is there any civil ſociety or corporation into which perſons are admitted without ſome kind of ſolemnity? And is the privilege of being admitted members of the Chriſtian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promiſes and bleſſings of the new covenant of the goſpel, leſs conſiderable, and fit to be conferred with leſs ſolemnity? I ſpeak to Chriſtians; and they who are ſo in good earneſt, will, without my uſing more words about it, conſider what I ſay in this particular.

III. Another and very neceſſary part of the good education of children is, by degrees, to inform, and carefully to inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themſelves; that ſo they may be taught how to behave themſelves in all the ſteps of their life, from their firſt capacity of reaſon till they arrive at the more perfect uſe and exerciſe of that

faculty; when, if at firſt they be well inſtructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themſelves afterwards.

This duty God does expreſsly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Iſrael. Speaking of the law which he had given them, *Thou ſhalt* (ſays he, Deut. vi. 7.) *teach them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up.* And this God long before promiſed, that Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, would do: Gen. xviii. 19. *I know Abraham*, (ſays he), *that he will command his children, and his houſhold after him, to keep the way of the Lord.*

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the firſt budding and appearance of reaſon and underſtanding in children. So the Prophet directs, Iſ. xxviii. 9. 10. *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts. For precept muſt be upon precept*, &c.

To this end we muſt, by ſuch degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themſelves. And, in the firſt place, we muſt inform them, that there is ſuch a being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things: and then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands; that *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves;* that he continually preſerves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy: and therefore we ought to aſk every thing of him by prayer, becauſe this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, becauſe this is a juſt and eaſy tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberleſs favours and benefits.

And, after this, they are to be inſtructed more particularly in their duty to God and men; as I ſhall ſhew more fully afterwards. And becauſe fear and hope are the two paſſions which do chiefly ſway and govern human nature, and the main ſprings and principles of action, therefore children are to be carefully informed, that there is a life after death, wherein men ſhall receive from God

God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endleſs puniſhment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life: that God will love and reward thoſe who do his will, and keep his commandments; but will execute a dreadful puniſhment upon the workers of iniquity, and the wilful tranſgreſſors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made ſenſible of the great degeneracy and corruption of human nature, derived to us by the fall and wilful tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents; and of the way of our recovery out of this miſerable ſtate by Jeſus Chriſt, whom God hath ſent, in our nature, to purchaſe and accompliſh the redemption and ſalvation of mankind, from the captivity of ſin and Satan, and from the damnation of hell.

IV. The good education of children conſiſts not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty; but more eſpecially in endeavouring, with the greateſt care and prudence, to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this muſt be done by training them up to the exerciſe of the following graces and virtues.

1. To obedience and modeſty, to diligence and ſincerity, and to tenderneſs and pity, as the general diſpoſitions to religion and virtue.

2. To the good government of their paſſions, and of their tongue; and particularly to ſpeak truth, and to hate lying, as a baſe and vile quality; theſe being, as it were, the foundations of religion and virtue.

3. To piety and devotion towards God, to ſobriety and chaſtity with regard to themſelves, and to juſtice and charity towards all men, as the principal and eſſential parts of religion and virtue.

1. As the general diſpoſitions to religion and virtue, we muſt train them up,

1*ſt*, To obedience. Parents muſt take great care to maintain their authority over their children; otherwiſe they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their inſtructions. If they once get head, and grow ſtubborn and diſobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, To modeſty; which is a fear of ſhame and diſgrace. This diſpoſition, which is proper to children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purpoſes. "They "are modeſt, (ſays Ariſtotle), who are afraid to offend; "and they are afraid to offend, who are moſt apt to "do it:" as children are; becauſe they are much under the power of their paſſions, without a proportionable ſtrength of reaſon to govern them and keep them under.

Now, modeſty is not properly a virtue; but it is a very good ſign of a tractable and towardly diſpoſition, and a great preſervative and ſecurity againſt ſin and vice. And thoſe children who are much under the reſtraint of modeſty, we look upon as moſt hopeful and likely to prove good: whereas immodeſty is a vitious temper broke looſe and got free from all reſtraint. So that there is nothing left to keep an impudent perſon from ſin when fear of ſhame is gone; for ſin will ſoon take poſſeſſion of that perſon whom ſhame hath left. He that is once become ſhameleſs, hath proſtituted himſelf. Therefore preſerve this diſpoſition in children as much as is poſſible, as one of the beſt means to preſerve their innocency, and to bring them to goodneſs.

3*dly*, To diligence; *ſine qua vir magnus nunquam extitit*: "Without which (ſays one) there never was any great and excellent perſon." When the Roman hiſtorians deſcribe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character, as an eſſential part of it, that he was *incredibili induſtriâ, diligentiâ ſingulari*; "of incredible "induſtry, of ſingular diligence;" or ſomething to that purpoſe. And indeed a perſon can neither be excellently good nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himſelf could not be ſo bad and miſchievous as he is, if he were not ſo ſtirring and reſtleſs a ſpirit, and did not compaſs the earth, and *go to and fro, ſeeking whom he might devour*.

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, thoſe great diſturbers of the Roman ſtate; as well as of Cæſar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at laſt diſſolved the Roman commonwealth, by their ambition and contention for ſuperiority: this, I ſay, enters into all their characters, that they were of

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a vigorous and indefatigable ſpirit. So that diligence in itſelf is neither a virtue nor a vice; but may be applied either way, to good or bad purpoſes: and yet where all other requiſites do concur, it is a very proper inſtrument and diſpoſition for virtue.

Therefore train up children to diligence, if ever you deſire they ſhould excel in any kind. *The hand of the diligent* (ſaith Solomon, Prov. x. 4.) *maketh rich;* rich in eſtate, rich in knowledge. *Seeſt thou a man diligent in his buſineſs?* (as the ſame wiſe man obſerves, Prov. xxii. 29.), *he ſhall ſtand before princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean* (or obſcure) *men.* And again, *The hand of the diligent ſhall bear rule; but the ſlothful ſhall be under tribute,* Prov. xii. 24. Diligence puts almoſt every thing into our power, and will in time make children capable of the beſt and greateſt things.

Whereas idleneſs is the bane and ruin of children: it is the unbending of their ſpirits, the ruſt of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow; not as huſbandmen do their lands, that they may get new heart and ſtrength, but to impair and loſe that which they have. Children that are bred up in lazineſs, are almoſt neceſſarily bad; becauſe they cannot take the pains to be good: and they cannot take pains, becauſe they have never been inured and accuſtomed to it; which makes their ſpirits reſtive, and when you have occaſion to quicken them, and ſpur them up to buſineſs, they will ſtand ſtock ſtill.

Therefore never let your children be without a calling, or without ſome uſeful, or at leaſt innocent employment, that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of neceſſity of being vitious, for want of ſomething better to do. The devil tempts the active and vigorous into his ſervice, knowing what fit and proper inſtruments they are to do his drudgery: but the ſlothful and idle, no body having hired them, and ſet them on work, lie in his way, and he ſtumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themſelves to his ſervice; and having nothing to do, they even tempt the devil himſelf to tempt them, and to take them in his way.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, To ſincerity: which is not ſo properly a ſingle virtue, as the life and ſoul of all other graces and virtues; and without which, what ſhew of goodneſs ſoever a man may make, he is unſound and rotten at the heart. Cheriſh therefore this diſpoſition in children, as that which when they come to be men will be the great ſecurity and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and men.

5*thly*, To tenderneſs and pity: which when they come to engage in buſineſs, and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar againſt injuſtice and oppreſſion; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preſerve this goodneſs and tenderneſs of nature, this ſo very humane and uſeful affection, keep children, as much as is poſſible, out of the way of bloody ſights, and ſpectacles of cruelty; and diſcountenance in them all cruel and barbarous uſage of creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their ſport and pleaſure; becauſe this will inſenſibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them leſs apt to compaſſionate the wants of the poor, and the ſufferings and afflictions of the miſerable.

2. As the main foundations of religion and virtue, children muſt be carefully trained up to the government of their paſſions, and of their tongues; and particularly to ſpeak truth, and to hate lying as a baſe and vile quality.

1*ſt*, To the good government of their paſſions. It is the diſorder of theſe, more eſpecially of deſire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder; inordinate deſire, to covetouſneſs, and fraud, and oppreſſion; and fear many times awes men into ſin, and deters them from their duty.

Now, if theſe paſſions be cheriſhed, or even but let alone in children, they will in a ſhort time grow headſtrong and unruly; and when they come to be men, will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the underſtanding into prejudice and wilfulneſs: but if they be carefully obſerved and prudently reſtrained, they may by degrees be managed, and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being pruned

pruned away, they may prove excellent inſtruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to diſcountenance in children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to ſhew them the unreaſonableneſs and deformity of it. Check their longing deſires after things pleaſant, and uſe them to frequent diſappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them, they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to ſubmit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you ſee them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any ſin, or to be tempted, by telling a lie, to commit one fault to hide and excuſe another; which children are very apt to do: the beſt remedy of this evil will be, to plant a greater fear againſt a leſs, and to tell them what and whom they ſhould chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the body; but him who after he hath killed, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell.*

The neglect of children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their paſſions, is the true cauſe why many that have proved ſincere Chriſtians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their converſation, and their lives have been full of inequalities and breaches; which have not only been matter of great trouble and diſquiet to themſelves, but of great ſcandal to religion; when their light, which ſhould ſhine before men, is ſo often darkened and obſcured by theſe frequent and viſible infirmities.

2*dly*, To the government of their tongues. To this end teach children ſilence, eſpecially in the preſence of their betters; and as ſoon as they are capable of ſuch a leſſon, let them be taught not to ſpeak, but upon conſideration, both of what they ſay, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them that moſt neceſſary duty and virtue of ſpeaking truth, as one of the beſt and ſtrongeſt bands of human ſociety and commerce: and poſſeſs them with the baſeneſs and vileneſs of telling a lie; for if it be ſo great a provocation to give a man the lie,

lie, then ſurely to be guilty of that fault, muſt be a mighty reproach.

They who write of Japan tell us, that thoſe people, though mere Heathens, take ſuch an effectual courſe in the education of their children, as to render a lie and breach of faith above all things odious to them: inſomuch that it is a very rare thing for any perſon among them to be taken in a lie, or found guilty of breach of faith. And cannot the rules of Chriſtianity be rendered as effectual to reſtrain men from theſe faults which are ſcandalous even to nature, and much more ſo to the Chriſtian religion?

To the government of the tongue does likewiſe belong the reſtraining of children from lewd and obſcene words, from vain and profane talk; and eſpecially from horrid oaths and imprecations: from all which they are eaſily kept at firſt; but if they are once accuſtomed to them, it will be found no ſuch eaſy matter for them to get quit of theſe evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulneſs over themſelves, to keep oaths out of their common diſcourſe; but if they be heated and in paſſion, they throw out oaths and curſes as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling ſtones, or any thing that comes next to hand, at one another. So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in children to grow up into a habit.

3. As the principal and eſſential parts of religion and virtue, let children be carefully bred up,

1*ſt*, To ſobriety and temperance in regard to themſelves; under which I comprehend likewiſe purity and chaſtity. The government of the ſenſual appetite, as to all kind of bodily pleaſures, is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent inſtrument of it, and a neceſſary foundation of piety and juſtice. For he that cannot govern himſelf, is not like to diſcharge his duty either to God or men. And therefore St. Paul puts ſobriety firſt, as a primary and principal virtue in which men are inſtructed by the Chriſtian religion, and which muſt be laid as the foundation both of piety towards God, and of righteouſneſs to men: *The grace of God* (for ſo he calls the goſpel) *that bringeth ſalvation to all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts,*

luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world. It firſt teacheth us to *live ſoberly*; and unleſs we train up children to this virtue, we muſt never expect that they will either *live righteouſly* or *godly in this preſent world.*

Eſpecially, children muſt be bred up to great ſobriety and temperance in their diet; which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good ſaying I have met with ſomewhere, *Magna pars virtutis eſt bene moratus venter:* "A well-mannered and well-governed "appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great "part of virtue." I do not mean, that children ſhould be brought up according to the rules of a Leſſian diet, which ſets an equal ſtint to all ſtomachs; and is as ſenſeleſs a thing, as a law would be which ſhould injoin that ſhoes for all mankind ſhould be made upon one and the ſame laſt.

2*dly*, To a ſerious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, ſtill and quiet, real and ſubſtantial, without much ſhew and noiſe; and as free as may be from all tricks of ſuperſtition, or freaks of enthuſiaſm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almoſt unavoidably inſinuate themſelves into the religion of children; and, when they are grown up, will make them appear, to wiſe and ſober perſons, phantaſtical and conceited; and render them very apt to impoſe their own fooliſh ſuperſtitions and wild conceits upon others, who underſtand religion much better than themſelves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things; to ſerve him in private, and to attend conſtantly upon his publick worſhip, and to keep their minds intent upon the ſeveral parts of it, without wandering and diſtraction: to pray to God as the fountain of all grace, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*; and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our moſt gracious and conſtant benefactor, and the great patron and preſerver of our lives: to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: to be always under a lively ſenſe and apprehenſion of his pure and all-ſeeing eye, which beholds us in ſecret: and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great lawgiver, *who is able to ſave, and to deſtroy*;

and with an awful regard to the ſtrict and impartial judgment of the great day.

3*dly*, To juſtice and honeſty: to defraud and oppreſs no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their promiſes and contracts; and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the equity of that great rule, which is ſo natural, and ſo eaſy, that even children are capable of it; I mean, that rule which our bleſſed Saviour tells us *is the law and the prophets*, namely, that we ſhould do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their caſe and circumſtances, and they in ours.

You that are parents, and have to do in the world, ought to be juſt and equal in all your dealings; in the firſt place, for the ſake of your own ſouls; and next, for the ſake of your children; not only that you may entail no curſe upon the eſtate you leave them, but likewiſe that you may teach them no injuſtice by the example you ſet before them: which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing; becauſe of the preſent worldly advantage which it ſeems to bring, and becauſe juſtice is in truth a manly virtue, and leaſt underſtood by children: and therefore injuſtice is a vice which they will ſooneſt practiſe, and with the leaſt reluctancy, becauſe they have the leaſt knowledge of it in many particular caſes: and becauſe they have ſo little ſenſe of this great virtue, they ſhould not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and ſport, even when they play for little or nothing; for if they practiſe it in that caſe, and be unjuſt in a little, they will be much more tempted to be ſo when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember, that Xenophon, in his *inſtitution of Cyrus*, which he deſigned for the idea of a well educated prince, tells us this little, but very inſtructive ſtory concerning young Cyrus: That his governor, the better to make him to underſtand the nature of juſtice, puts this caſe to him. You ſee there (ſays he to Cyrus) two boys playing, of different ſtature; the leſſer of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very ſhort one: now, (ſays he), if you were a judge, how would you diſpoſe of theſe two garments? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reaſon as he thought, paſſeth this ſudden ſentence, That the taller boy ſhould have the longer garment, and he that

that was of lower ſtature the ſhorter, becauſe this certainly was fitteſt for them both. Upon which his governor ſharply rebukes him to this purpoſe, telling him, that if he were to make two coats for them, he ſaid well; but he did not put this caſe to him as a taylor, but as a judge, and as ſuch he had given a very wrong ſentence: for a judge (ſays he) ought not to conſider what is moſt fit, but what is juſt; not who could make the beſt uſe of a thing, but who hath the moſt right to it.

This I bring, partly to ſhew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be inſtilled into children; but chiefly to prove, that juſtice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein children may be more eaſily miſled, than in matter of right and wrong: therefore children ſhould be taught the general principles and rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs; becauſe, if we would teach them to do juſtice, we muſt teach them to know what juſtice is. For many are unjuſt merely out of ignorance, and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4*thly*, To charity; I mean, chiefly to the poor and deſtitute; becauſe this, as it is an eſſential, ſo is it a moſt ſubſtantial part of religion. Now, to encourage this diſpoſition in children, we muſt not only give them the example of it, but muſt frequently inculcate upon them ſuch paſſages of ſcripture as theſe: that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction*: that *as we ſow* in this kind, *ſo ſhall we reap*: that *he ſhall have judgment without mercy, who hath ſhewed no mercy*: that at the judgment of the great day we ſhall in a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omiſſion of this duty; and ſhall then be abſolved or condemned, according as we have exerciſed or neglected this great virtue of the Chriſtian religion.

SERMON LII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

V. THE good education of children conſiſts in giving them good example. This courſe David took in his family, as appears by that ſolemn reſolution of his, Pſal. ci. 2. *I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way; I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart.* Let parents and maſters of families give good example to their children and ſervants, in a conſtant ſerving of God in their families; which will nouriſh religion in thoſe that are under their care: and let them alſo be exemplary in a ſober and holy converſation before thoſe that belong to them.

And let not your children, as far as is poſſible, have any bad examples to converſe with, either among your ſervants, or their own companions; leſt *by walking with them, they learn their way, and get a blot to their ſouls.* There is a contagion in example, and nothing doth more ſlily inſinuate itſelf and gain upon us, than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let children always have good examples before them.

Eſpecially, let parents themſelves be exemplary to them in the beſt things, becauſe their example is of all other the moſt powerful, and carries greateſt authority with it. And without this, inſtruction will ſignify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be loſt. We ſhall find it very hard to perſuade our children to do that which they ſee we do not practiſe ourſelves: for even children have ſo much ſenſe and ſagacity as to underſtand, that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inward-

ly

ly believe. Example is the moſt lively way of teaching: and becauſe children are much given to imitation, it is likewiſe a very delightful way of inſtruction, and that of which children are moſt capable; both becauſe it is beſt underſtood, and is apt to make the deepeſt impreſſion upon them.

So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themſelves, for the ſake of their children. If you deſire to have them good, the beſt way to make them ſo, is, to give them the example of it in being good yourſelves. For this reaſon parents ſhould take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to children to ſin, becauſe it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a juſtification of their wickedneſs.

With what reaſon canſt thou expect that thy children ſhould follow thy good inſtructions, when thou thyſelf giveſt them an ill example? Thou doſt but as it were becken to them with thy head, and ſhew them the way to heaven by thy good counſel; but thou taketh them by the hand, and leadeſt them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you ſwear, or tell a lie, or are paſſionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and loſe all reverence and obedience to them, by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raiſe and inflame others to the imitation of them; but when they come from one who is faulty and vitious in that kind himſelf, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exerciſe of thoſe virtues which we plainly ſee they do not practiſe themſelves. It is the Apoſtle's argument, *Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf?* Thou that teacheſt thy children to ſpeak truth, doſt thou tell a lie? Thou that ſayeſt they muſt not ſwear, doſt thou profane the name of God by cuſtomary oaths and curſes? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkneſs, an inſtructer of the fooliſh*, and *a teacher of babes*; be-

cauſe thou thyſelf *haſt* only *a form of knowledge and of truth in the law*, but art deſtitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your children, you defeat your own counſels, and undermine the beſt inſtructions you can give them; and they will all be ſpilt like water upon the barren ſands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good education conſiſts in wiſe and early reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable reproof and correction: and this alſo is one way of inſtruction. So Solomon tells us, Prov. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wiſdom.* And though both theſe do ſuppoſe a fault that is paſt, yet the great end of them is, to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore, whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be ſufficient in this kind; becauſe the end is always to give meaſure to the means: and where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the buſineſs, reproof may ſtop there without proceeding farther: or when that will not do, if a ſharp word and a ſevere admonition will be effectual, the rod may be ſpared.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to ſin, and be ſo managed, that children may perceive that you are in good earneſt, and reſolved, that if they will not reform, they ſhall certainly be puniſhed: and provided likewiſe, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We muſt not uſe mildneſs in the caſe of a wilful and heinous ſin, eſpecially if it be exemplary, and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon ſuch an occaſion, is rather to countenance the fault, and ſeems to argue that we are not ſenſible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due diſlike and deteſtation for it: ſuch cold reproofs as thoſe which old Eli gave his ſons, 1 Sam. ii. 23. 24. *Why do ye ſuch things? for I hear of your evil dealings, by all this people;* (that is, their carriage was ſuch as gave publick ſcandal). *Nay, my ſons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to tranſgreſs.*

Such

Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their sin: and so God interprets it; and therefore calls it, *a kicking at his sacrifice, and a despising of his offering*, chap. ii. 29. And he threatens Eli with most terrible judgments upon this very account; *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our severity must be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater severity must be used; so much at least, as may be an effectual restraint for the future. Here was Eli's miscarriage; that in the case of so great a fault as his sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof and correction, which is amendment for the future: but he used such a mildness in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage, than restrain them in their vile courses; for so the text says, that *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle reproof will suffice. But most children are of that temper, that correction must be sometimes used; and a fond indulgence in this case, is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and, in truth, not love, but hatred. So the wise man tell us, Prov. xiii. 24. *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes.* Chap. xix. 18. *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* And again, chap. xxii. 15. *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Chap. xxiii. 13. 14. *Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Again, chap. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.* He mentions the mother emphatically; because she many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that correction is of great use, and often necessary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their

their children, but to themſelves: for God many times puniſheth thoſe parents very ſeverely, who have neglected this neceſſary piece of diſcipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal threatening, than that concerning Eli and his houſe, for his fond indulgence to his ſons, who, when they came to be men, proved ſuch horrible ſcandals not only to their father, but to the prieſt's office; and to that degree, as to *make the ſacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the people.* I will recite the threatening at large, for an admonition to parents, that they be not guilty in this kind: 1 Sam. iii. 11. 12. 13. 14. *The Lord ſaid to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Iſrael, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it, ſhall tingle. In that day, I will perform againſt Eli, all things which I have ſpoken concerning his houſe: when I begin, I will alſo make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his houſe for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not. And therefore I have ſworn unto the houſe of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice nor offering for ever.* I know very well, that this enormous wickedneſs of Eli's ſons was committed by them after they were grown to be men. But this inſtance is nevertheleſs to my preſent purpoſe; there being hardly any doubt to be made, but that it was the natural effect of a remiſs and too indulgent an education.

Yea, very often God doth correct and remarkably puniſh fond parents by thoſe very children who have wanted due reproof and correction. Of which the ſcripture gives us a remarkable inſtance in Adonijah; upon the mention of whoſe rebellion againſt David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondneſs of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cauſe of it: *For his father had not diſpleaſed him at any time in ſaying, Why haſt thou done ſo?* And on the contrary, the wiſe ſon of Sirach tells us, that *he that chaſtiſeth his ſon, ſhall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I ſhall mention, as a part of good education, is, the bringing of children to be publickly catechized by the miniſter, to prepare them for ſolemn confirmation.

It

It was with a particular reſpect to this work of publick catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at firſt propoſed to treat thus largely of the good education of children; hoping it might be of good uſe to handle this ſubject more fully than it hath uſually been done, at leaſt to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I ſhall ſay ſomething, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of catechizing children.

1. For the nature of it; it is a particular way of teaching by queſtion and anſwer, accommodated and fitted for the inſtruction of children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where injoined in ſcripture: but inſtruction in general is; and I doubt not, but that, upon this general warrant, parents and miniſters may uſe that way of inſtruction of children, which is moſt fit and proper to inſtil into them the principles of religion. It is true, that the word κατηχεῖν, from whence our word catechiſm doth come, is uſed in ſcripture to ſignify teaching in general: but it hath ſince by eccleſiaſtical writers been appropriated to that particular way of inſtruction, which hath been long in uſe in the Chriſtian church, and is commonly called *catechizing*.

2. As to the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to children; becauſe they are ſubject to forgetfulneſs, and want of attention. Now, catechizing is a good remedy againſt both theſe; becauſe, by queſtions put to them, children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and muſt give ſome anſwer to the queſtion that is aſked: and a catechiſm being ſhort, and containing in a little compaſs the moſt neceſſary principles of religion, it is the more eaſily remembered.

The great uſefulneſs, and indeed the neceſſity of it, plainly appears by experience. For it very ſeldom happens, that children which have not been catechized, have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and, for want of this, are incapable of receiving any great benefit by ſermons, which ſuppoſe perſons to be in ſome meaſure inſtructed beforehand in the main principles of religion.

Beſides

Beſides that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an eaſy prey to ſeducers. And we have had ſad experience of this in our age; and, among many other diſmal effects of our late civil confuſions, this is none of the leaſt, that publick catechizing was almoſt wholly diſuſed, and private too, in moſt families: for, had catechizing of children been continued, it is very probable, that this age would have been infeſted with fewer errors, and with fewer ſchiſms; and that there would not have been ſo much apoſtaſy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true obſervation, that catechizing, and the hiſtory of the martyrs, have been the two great pillars of the Proteſtant religion.

There being then ſo great a neceſſity and uſefulneſs of this way of inſtruction, I would earneſtly recommend the practice of it to parents and maſters of families, with reſpect to their children and ſervants. For I do not think, that this work ſhould lie wholly upon miniſters. You muſt do your part at home, who, by your conſtant reſidence in your families, have better and more eaſy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your children and ſervants. There you muſt prepare them for publick catechizing, that the work of the miniſter may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns miniſters, I intend, by God's aſſiſtance, ſo ſoon as the buſineſs can be put into a good method, to begin this exerciſe. And I do earneſtly intreat all that have young children and ſervants, to bring ſuch of them as are fit, to be publickly catechized and inſtructed in the principles of religion: and I ſhall, as often as ſhall be thought expedient, ſpend ſome time in this work, between afternoon prayers and ſermon.

The catechiſm to be uſed ſhall be that appointed in our liturgy; which is ſhort, and contains in it the chief principles of the Chriſtian religion. And I ſhall make a ſhort and plain explication of the heads of it, ſuitable to the capacity of children. And becauſe this may not probably be of ſo great advantage to thoſe who are of riper years and underſtandings; yet, becauſe children are to be inſtructed as well as men, I muſt intreat thoſe who

are

are like to carry away the leaſt profit, to bring with them the more patience; eſpecially ſince I ſhall, for their ſakes, in the conſtant courſe of my afternoon ſermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the Chriſtian belief: a work which you know I have ſome time ago entered upon.

VIII. The laſt thing I ſhall mention, and with which the ſtate of childhood ends, is, the bringing of children to the Biſhop, to be ſolemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themſelves the vow which by their ſureties they entered into at their baptiſm.

This is acknowledged by almoſt all ſects and parties of Chriſtians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great uſe, when it is performed with that due preparation of perſons for it, by the miniſters to whoſe charge they belong, and with that ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very deſirable that confirmations ſhould be more frequent, and in ſmaller numbers at a time, that ſo the Biſhop may apply himſelf more particularly to every perſon that is to be confirmed; that by this means the thing may make the deeper impreſſion, and lay the ſtronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wiſh, both to prevent confuſion, and for the eaſe alſo of the Biſhop, that his work may not be endleſs, that miniſters would take care that none may preſent themſelves to the Biſhop, or be preſented by the miniſters, to be confirmed a ſecond time; becauſe a great many are wont to offer themſelves every time there is a confirmation; which is both very diſorderly and unreaſonable, there being every whit as little reaſon for a ſecond confirmation, as there is for a ſecond baptiſm: and if any perſons need ſo often to be confirmed, it is a ſign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

Secondly, I proceed to the ſecond general head; which was, to give ſome more particular directions for the management of this work, of the good education of children, in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual to its end.

1. Endeavour, as well as you can, to diſcover the particular temper and diſpoſition of children, that you may ſuit and apply yourſelves to it, and, by ſtriking in with nature,

nature, may ſteer and govern them in the ſweeteſt and eaſieſt way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which huſbandmen are wont very carefully to inquire into, that they may apply the ſeed to the ſoil, and plant in it that which is moſt proper for it.

Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuſet.
Hic ſegetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ :

"Every ſoil is not proper for all ſorts of grain or fruit; "one ground is fit for corn, another for vines." And ſo is it in the tempers and diſpoſitions of children: ſome are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and ſome more ſtrongly inclined to one vice than another; which is a great ſecret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a juſt and ſatisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the beſt advantage: that, where we diſcern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may caſt in ſuch ſeeds and principles, as, by their ſuitableneſs to their particular tempers, we judge moſt likely to take ſooneſt and deepeſt root; and, when theſe are grown up, and have taken poſſeſſion of the ſoil, they will prepare it for the ſeeds of other virtues.

And ſo likewiſe, when we diſcover in their nature a more particular diſpoſition, and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we muſt, with great diligence and care, apply ſuch inſtructions, and plant ſuch principles in them, as may be moſt effectual to alter this evil diſpoſition of their minds, that, whilſt nature is tender and flexible, we may gently bend it the other way: and it is almoſt incredible what ſtrange things, by prudence and patience, may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverſe and crooked diſpoſition.

So that it is of very great uſe to obſerve and diſcover the particular tempers of children, that, in all our inſtruction and management of them, we may apply ourſelves to their nature, and hit their peculiar diſpoſition. By this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in human ways, and ſuch as are much more agreeable to their temper, than conſtraint and neceſſity, which are harſh

harſh and churliſh, and againſt the grain. Whatever is done with delight, goes on chearfully; but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily: therefore, when we are forming and faſhioning children to religion and virtue, we ſhould make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature in the way it will moſt eaſily go. Every temper gives ſome particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them, and ſteer them more eaſily: but if we take a contrary courſe, we muſt expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy.

Such ways of education as are prudently fitted to the particular diſpoſitions of children, are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain: but thoſe ways and methods which are applied croſs to nature, are like wind againſt tide, which makes a great ſtir and conflict, but a very ſlow progreſs. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents ſhould be philoſophers, but that they ſhould uſe the beſt wiſdom they have in a matter of ſo great concernment.

2. In your inſtruction of children, endeavour to plant in them thoſe principles of religion and virtue which are moſt ſubſtantial, and are like to have the beſt influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and laſting uſe to them. Look to the ſeed you ſow, that it be ſound and good, and for the benefit and uſe of mankind. This is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the ſeed is caſt.

Labour to beget in children a right apprehenſion of thoſe things which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary to the knowledge of God and our duty; and to make them ſenſible of the great evil and danger of ſin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if theſe principles once take root, they will ſpread far and wide, and have a vaſt influence upon all their actions; and, unleſs ſome powerful luſt, or temptation to vice, hurry them away, they will probably accompany them, and ſtick by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their knowledge and apprehenſions of religion, in which they themſelves have been educated, and too often according to their zeal

without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded opinions in the minds of their children, and to faſhion them to a party, by infuſing into them the particular notions and phraſes of a ſect; which, when they come to be examined, have no ſubſtance, nor perhaps ſenſe in them: and, by this means, inſtead of bringing them up in the true and ſolid principles of Chriſtianity, they take a great deal of pains to inſtruct them in ſome doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps falſe at the bottom; whereby, inſtead of teaching them to hate ſin, they fix them in ſchiſm, and teach them to hate and damn all thoſe who differ from them, and are oppoſite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better Chriſtians than themſelves.

And indeed nothing is more common, and more to be pitied, than to ſee with what a confident contempt and ſcornful pity ſome ill-inſtructed and ignorant people will lament the blindneſs and ignorance of thoſe who have a thouſand times more true knowledge and ſkill than themſelves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice, as well as knowledge of the Chriſtian religion; believing thoſe who do not reliſh their affected phraſes and uncouth forms of ſpeech, to be ignorant of the myſtery of the goſpel, and utter ſtrangers to the life and power of godlineſs.

But now, what is the effect of this miſtaken way of education? The harveſt is juſt anſwerable to the huſbandry.

Infelix lolium & ſteriles dominantur avenæ :.

As they have ſown, ſo they muſt expect to reap; and, inſtead of good grain, to "have cockle and tares." *They have ſown the wind, and they ſhall reap the whirlwind;* as the expreſſion is in the Prophet: inſtead of true religion, and of a ſober and peaceable converſation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable ſpirit, a furious and boiſterous zeal, which will neither ſuffer themſelves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you deſire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you muſt take care to plant in children the main

main and ſubſtantial principles of Chriſtianity, which may give them a general bias to holineſs and goodneſs; and not to little particular opinions, which being once fixed in them by the ſtrong prejudice of education, will hardly ever be rooted out.

3. Do all that in you lies to check and diſcourage in them the firſt beginnings of ſin and vice. So ſoon as ever they appear, pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn; which is a neceſſary piece of good huſbandry. Vices, like ill weeds, grow apace; and if they once take to the ſoil, it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: but if we watch them, and cut them up as ſoon as they appear, this will diſcourage the root, and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your children be not habituated and accuſtomed to any evil courſe. A vice that is of any conſiderable growth and continuance, will ſoon grow obſtinate; and having once ſpread its roots, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it. A child may be ſo long neglected till he be overgrown with vice, to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved diſpoſition of children, it will be one of the hardeſt things in the world to give a ſtop to it. It is the Apoſtle's caution, to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin;* which they who go on in an evil courſe, will moſt certainly be. We ſhould obſerve the firſt appearances of evil in children, and kill thoſe young ſerpents as ſoon as they ſtir, leſt they bite them to death.

4. Bring them, as ſoon as they are capable of it, to the publick worſhip of God, where he hath promiſed his more eſpecial preſence and bleſſing. It is in Zion, the place of God's publick worſhip, where *the Lord hath commanded the bleſſing, even life for evermore.* There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of grace in us. This is the pool where the angel uſeth to come, and to *move the waters.* Bring your children hither; where, if they diligently attend, they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

And when they come from the church, call them

frequently to an account of what they have heard and learned there. This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care; and will fix it there, ſo as to make a deeper and more laſting impreſſion upon their minds.

5. Be careful more eſpecially to put them upon the exerciſe and practice of religion and virtue, in ſuch inſtances as their underſtanding and age are capable of. Teach them ſome ſhort and proper forms of prayer to God, to be ſaid by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at leaſt every morning and evening. A great many children neglect this, not from any ill diſpoſition of mind, but becauſe no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And, if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and cuſtom of any thing will, after a little while, make that eaſy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another. Knowledge prepares and diſpoſeth for practice; and practice is the beſt way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere ſpeculation is a very raw and rude thing, in compariſon of that true and diſtinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The moſt exact ſkill in geography is nothing, compared with the knowledge of that man, who, beſides the ſpeculative part, hath travelled over and carefully viewed the countries he hath read of. The moſt knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body, in compariſon of an experienced pilot and ſeaman: Becauſe knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere ſpeculation, as the ſkill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may eaſily miſtake rules, but frequent practice and experience are ſeldom deceived. Give me a man that conſtantly does a thing well, and that ſhall ſatisfy me, that he knows how to do it. That ſaying of our bleſſed Saviour, *If any man will do my will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf*, is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they underſtand the will of God beſt, who are moſt careful to do

do it. And ſo likewiſe, the beſt way to know what God is, is, to tranſcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and juſt, and good, and merciful, as he is.

Therefore, when the minds of children are once thoroughly poſſeſſed with the true principles of religion, we ſhould bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know. Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its ſhapes and appearances, and to practiſe their duty in the ſeveral inſtances of it, than to *ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels. Unto man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil, is underſtanding*, Job xxviii. 28. *Hereby* (ſaith St. John, 1 epiſt. ii. 3. 4.) *we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Xenophon tells us, that the Perſians, inſtead of making their children learned, taught them to be virtuous; and, inſtead of filling their heads with fine ſpeculations, taught them honeſty, and ſincerity, and reſolution; and endeavoured to make them wiſe and valiant, juſt and temperate. Lycurgus alſo, in the inſtitution of the Lacedæmonian commonwealth, took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I ſhould think, that the care of both is beſt; and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiſer and better men. And therefore, with the leave of ſo great and wiſe a lawgiver, I cannot but think, that this was a defect in his inſtitution; becauſe learning, if it be under the conduct of true wiſdom and goodneſs, is not only an ornament, but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

6. There muſt be great care and diligence uſed in this whole buſineſs of education, and more particularly in the inſtruction of children. There muſt be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; as the Prophet expreſſeth it, Iſ. xxviii. 10. The principles of religion and virtue muſt be inſtilled and dropt into them by ſuch degrees and in ſuch a meaſure

as they are capable of receiving them; for children are narrow-mouthed veſſels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they muſt alſo be accuſtomed to the practice and exerciſe of religion and goodneſs by degrees, till holineſs and virtue have taken root, and they be well ſettled and confirmed in a good courſe. Now, this requires conſtant attendance, and even the patience of the huſbandman, to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In ſome children the ſeeds that are ſown fall into a greater depth of earth; and therefore are of a ſlow diſcloſure, and it may be a conſiderable time before they appear above ground. It is long before they ſhoot and grow up to any height; and yet they may afterwards be very conſiderable: "Which (as an ingenious author "[Sir H. W.] obſerves) ſhould excite the care and pre-"vent the deſpair of parents; for if their children be "not ſuch ſpeedy ſpreaders and branchers as the vine, "they may perhaps prove

——*proles tardè creſcentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty, to rectify a perverſe diſpoſition. It is more eaſy to palliate the corruption of nature; but the cure of it requires time, and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and ſubdue it. It muſt firſt be checked and ſtopped in its courſe, and then weakened, and the force of it be broken by degrees; and at laſt, if it be poſſible, deſtroyed and rooted out.

7. and laſtly, To all theſe means we muſt add our conſtant and earneſt prayers to God for our children, that his grace may take an early poſſeſſion of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations, and towardly diſpoſitions for goodneſs; and that he would be pleaſed to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful aſſiſtance and bleſſing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. Parents may *plant*, and miniſters may *water*, but it is *God that muſt give the increaſe*.

Be often then upon your knees for your children. Do not only teach them to pray for themſelves, but do you likewiſe

likewiſe, with great fervour and earneſtneſs, *commend them to God, and to the power of his grace;* which alone is able to ſanctify them. Apply yourſelves to *the Father of lights; from whom comes every good and perfect gift.* Beg his Holy Spirit, and aſk divine knowledge and wiſdom for them of him, *who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no man.* Beſeech him to ſeaſon their tender years with his *fear*, which *is the beginning of wiſdom.* Pray for them as Abraham did for Iſhmael, *Oh that Iſhmael may live in thy ſight!*

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themſelves to prayer, earneſt and importunate prayer to God, as their laſt refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Auſtin, by the conſtancy and importunity of her prayers, obtained of God the converſion of her ſon, who proved afterwards ſo great and glorious an inſtrument of good to the church of God: according to what St. Ambroſe, Biſhop of Milan, to encourage her to perſevere in her fervent prayers for her ſon, had ſaid to her, *Fieri non poteſt, ut filius tot lacrymarum pereat:* "It cannot be, (ſays he), "that a ſon of ſo many prayers and tears ſhould miſ-"carry." God's grace is free; but it is not unlikely, but that God will at laſt give in this bleſſing to our earneſt prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore *pray* for them *without ceaſing; pray and faint not.* Great importunity in prayer ſeldom fails of a gracious anſwer. Our bleſſed Saviour ſpake two parables on purpoſe to encourage us herein: not becauſe God is moved, much leſs becauſe he is tired out with our importunity; but becauſe it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodneſs. And *to them that believe all things are poſſible*, ſays our bleſſed Lord. To whom, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON LIII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The third ſermon on this text.

I Proceed to the next general head which I propoſed, namely,

Thirdly, To diſcover ſome of the more remarkable and common miſcarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean groſs neglects, for want of care; but miſtakes and miſcarriages, for want of prudence and ſkill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and inſtructers. And I ſhall, for method's ſake, reduce the more conſiderable and common miſcarriages to theſe three heads.

1. In matter of inſtruction.
2. In matter of example.
3. In matter of reproof and correction.

I. In matter of inſtruction. Parents do very often mainly miſcarry in not teaching their children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them: As, when we teach them any thing is a ſin that really is not, or that any thing is not a ſin which in truth is ſo: or when we teach them to lay more ſtreſs and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient, to be in the higheſt degree neceſſary; or that which it may be is only inconvenient, or may be an occaſion of ſcandal to ſome weak Chriſtians, to be a ſin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewiſe lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to inſtruct them in leſſer things, and as ſtrict in injoining them, and as ſevere in puniſhing the commiſſion or neglect of them, according as they eſteem them good or evil, as if they were *the weightier things*

things of the law, and matters of the greateſt moment in religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great ſeverity reſtrained their children in the wearing of their hair: nay, I can remember ſince the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a ſin of the firſt magnitude; and when miniſters generally, whatever their text was, did in every ſermon either find or make an occaſion with great ſeverity to reprove the great ſin of long hair; and if they ſaw any one in the congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewiſe known ſome parents that have ſtrictly forbidden their children the uſe of ſome ſorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous ſins, upon a miſtake, that becauſe there was in them a mixture of fortune and ſkill, they were therefore unlawful: A reaſon which I think hath no weight and force in it; though I do not deny, but human laws may, for very prudent reaſons, either reſtrain or forbid the uſe of theſe games, becauſe of the boundleſs expence, both of money and time, which is many times occaſioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the ſame perſons, that would not only allow, but even encourage their children to deſpiſe the very ſervice of God under ſome forms, which according to their ſeveral apprehenſions they eſteemed to be ſuperſtitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of moſt dangerous conſequence, and have often obſerved it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their children doubtful opinions, and lay great ſtreſs upon them, as if they were ſaving or damning points; and hereby ſet ſuch an edge and keenneſs upon them for or againſt ſome indifferent modes and circumſtances of God's worſhip, as if the very being of a church, and the eſſence of religion, were concerned in them?

Theſe certainly are great miſtakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of ſo wide and vaſt a difference, as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and neceſſary. For when children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger

larger view of the world, and ſhall find, by the contrary practice of very wiſe and ſerious perſons, that they have quite different apprehenſions of theſe matters, and do not think that to be a ſin which their parents have ſo ſtrictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times puniſhed them more ſeverely for the doing of it than if they had told a lie; this may make them apt to queſtion whether any thing be a ſin: and the violence which they offer to their conſciences, and the ſtrain that they give them upon ſuch an occaſion, by complying with the general practice of others, contrary to the principles of their education, doth many times open a gap for great and real ſins.

Beſides that children which are bred up in high prejudices for or againſt indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do uſually, when they are grown up, prove to be men of narrow and contracted ſpirits; peeviſh, and froward, and uncharitable; and many times great bigots and zealots, either in the way of ſuperſtition or faction, according to the principles which have been inſtilled into them to biaſs them either way: and very hardly do they ever quit themſelves ſo clearly of their prejudices, as to become wiſe, and peaceable, and ſubſtantial Chriſtians.

In ſhort, if we carefully obſerve it, we ſhall find, that when children have been thus indiſcreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of ſober and judicious Chriſtians, as the civil behaviour and converſation of thoſe who have been unſkilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themſelves, does from the behaviour of thoſe who have had a more free and generous education.

II. In matter of example. There are many parents whoſe lives are exemplary in the main, who yet ſeem to uſe too great a freedom before their children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one,

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia:

"There is a very great reverence due to children." There are many things which are not ſins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all perſons. There are ſome words and actions ſo trivial and light, that they are not fit

fit to be ſaid or done before thoſe for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of converſation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we uſe before our ſuperiors and betters, we ſeem to contemn them; if before our inferiors, they will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be conſidered, that children do not underſtand the exact limits of good and evil; ſo that if in our words or actions we go to the utmoſt bounds of that which is lawful, we ſhall be in danger of ſhewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their ſteps; and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place; where yet men that will take care, may go ſafely enough. And therefore parents ſhould be very careful to keep their children from the confines of evil, and at as great a diſtance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions ſhould ever be tempered with gravity and circumſpection, that children may not ſee or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to ſin, or carry them to the borders of vice; leſt they ſhould not ſtop juſt there, but take a ſtep further than you intended they ſhould go.

III. In matter of reproof and correction. Many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miſcarriages in this part of education.

1. Of too much rigour and ſeverity; which, eſpecially with ſome ſort of tempers, hath very ill ſucceſs. The firſt experiment that ſhould be made upon children ſhould be, to allure them to their duty; and by reaſonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodneſs; by praiſe and reward, and ſometimes by ſhame and diſgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occaſion to proceed to ſeverity; eſpecially not to great ſeverities, which are very unſuitable to human nature. A mixture of prudent and ſeaſonable reproof or correction, when there is occaſion for it, may do very well; but whips are not *the cords of a man:* human nature may be driven by them, but it muſt be led by ſweeter and gentler ways.

Speuſippus cauſed the pictures of joy and gladneſs to be ſet round about his ſchool, to ſignify, that the buſineſs of education ought to be rendered as pleaſant as may

may be. And indeed children ſtand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodneſs. *Metus haud diuturni magiſter officii*, ſays Tully: "Fear alone will not teach a man his duty, and hold "him to it for any long time;" for when that is removed, nature will break looſe, and do like itſelf: beſides that frequent corrections make puniſhments to loſe their awe and force, and are apt to ſpoil the diſpoſition of children, and to harden them againſt ſhame; and after a while they will deſpiſe correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great ſeverities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended; and many times thoſe who were bred up in a very ſevere ſchool, hate learning ever after, for the ſake of the cruelty that was uſed to force it upon them. And ſo likewiſe an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodneſs, by unreaſonable ſtrictneſs and rigour, does often beget in them a laſting diſguſt and prejudice againſt religion; and teacheth them, as Eraſmus ſays, *virtutem ſimul odiſſe & noſſe*; "to hate virtue "at the ſame time that they teach them to know it." For by this means virtue is repreſented to the minds of children under a great diſadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together: ſo that, whenever they think of religion and virtue, they remember the ſeverity which was wont to accompany the inſtructions about it; and the natural hatred which men have for puniſhment, is by this means derived upon religion itſelf. And indeed, how can it be expected that children ſhould love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods ſhaked over them?

I inſiſt upon this the more, becauſe I do not remember to have obſerved more notorious inſtances of great miſcarriage, than in the children of very ſtrict and ſevere parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that nature, when it is thus overcharged, recoils the more terribly. It hath ſomething in it like the ſpring of an engine, which, being forcibly preſſed, does, upon the firſt liberty, return back with ſo much the greater violence. In like manner the vitious diſpoſitions of children, when reſtrained merely by the ſeverity of parents, do

do break forth ſtrangely as ſoon as ever they get looſe, and from under their diſcipline.

2. Another miſcarriage in this matter is, when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with paſſion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater, in the puniſhment of another. Beſides that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred; which uſually does not perſuade and reform, but provoke and exaſperate. And this probably may be one reaſon of the Apoſtle's admonition, *Parents, provoke not your children unto wrath;* becauſe that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of phyſick, which ought never to be adminiſtered in paſſion, but upon counſel and good advice.

And that paſſion is incident to parents upon this occaſion, the Apoſtle tells us, when he ſays, Heb. xii. 10. that *the parents of our fleſh chaſten us for their pleaſure;* that is, they do it many times to gratify their paſſion: *but God* chaſtens us *for our profit;* not in anger, but with a deſign to do us good. And can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A father is, as it were, a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts cenſures and puniſhments upon offenders. But how miſbecoming a thing would it be, to ſee a judge paſs ſentence upon a man in choler? It is the ſame thing to ſee a father in the heat and fury of his paſſion correct his child. If a father could but ſee himſelf in this mood, and how ill his paſſion becomes him, inſtead of being angry with his child, he would be out of patience with himſelf. I proceed to the next thing I propoſed, namely,

Fourthly, To make out the truth of the propoſition contained in the text, by ſhewing, how the good education of children comes to be of ſo great advantage, and to have ſo good and laſting an influence upon their whole lives.

I confeſs there are ſome wild and ſavage natures, monſtrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks, and barren as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore; which diſcover ſtrong and early propenſions to vice, and a violent antipathy to goodneſs. Such tempers are next to deſperate;

but yet they are not utterly intractable to the grace of God, and the religious care of parents.

I hope ſuch tempers as theſe are very rare, though God is pleaſed they ſhould ſometimes appear in the world, as inſtances of the great corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and of the great need of divine grace. But ſurely there is no temper that is abſolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced againſt that which is good. This would be ſo terrible an objection againſt the providence of God, as would be very hard to be anſwered. God be thanked, moſt tempers are tractable to good education; and there is very great probability of the good ſucceſs of it, if it be carefully and wiſely managed.

And, for the confirmation of this truth, I ſhall inſtance in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuous education of children.

1. It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the firſt poſſeſſion.

2. The advantage of habit and cuſtom.

1. Good education gives religion and virtue the advantage of the firſt poſſeſſion. The mind of man is an active principle, and will be employed about ſomething or other. It cannot ſtand idle, and will therefore take up with that which firſt offers itſelf. So ſoon as reaſon puts forth itſelf, and the underſtanding begins to be exerciſed, the mind of man diſcovers a natural thirſt after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes firſt. If it have not the waters of life and the pure ſtreams of goodneſs to allay that thirſt, it will ſeek to quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleaſures of this world.

Now, ſince children will be buſying their minds about ſomething, it is good that they ſhould be entertained with the beſt things, and with the beſt notions and principles of which their underſtanding and age are capable. It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may ſay, prejudiced the better way, and that religion ſhould get the firſt poſſeſſion of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender and freſh ſoil. And if parents be careleſs, and neglect this advantage, the enemy will be ſure to ſow his tares whilſt the huſbandman is aſleep.

Therefore

Therefore we ſhould prevent the devil, by giving God and goodneſs an early poſſeſſion of our children, and by letting him into their hearts betimes. Poſſeſſion is a great point; and it is of mighty conſequence to have nature planted with good ſeeds, before vitious inclinations ſpring up, and grow into ſtrength and habit.

I know that there is a ſpiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to ſpread it to the diſcouragement of an early piety, "A young ſaint, and "an old devil;" but notwithſtanding this, a young ſaint is moſt likely to prove an old one. Solomon, to be ſure, was of this mind; and I make no doubt but he made as wiſe and true proverbs as any body hath done ſince; him only excepted who was a much greater and wiſer man than Solomon.

2. Good education gives likewiſe the advantage of habit and cuſtom; and cuſtom is of mighty force. It is, as Pliny, in one of his epiſtles, ſays of it, *Efficaciſſimus omnium rerum magiſter:* "The moſt powerful and effe-"ctual maſter in every kind." It is an acquired, and a ſort of ſecond nature; and next to nature itſelf, a principle of greateſt power. Cuſtom bears a huge ſway in all human actions. Men love thoſe things, and do them with eaſe, to which they have been long inured and accuſtomed. And, on the contrary, men go againſt cuſtom with great regret and uneaſineſs.

And among all others, that cuſtom is moſt ſtrong which is begun in childhood: and we ſee in experience, the ſtrange power of education in forming perſons to religion and virtue. Now, education is nothing but certain cuſtoms planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilſt nature was tender.

We ſee likewiſe in common experience, how dangerous an evil habit and cuſtom is, and how hard to be altered. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curſe a man to purpoſe, wiſhed, that the gods would engage him in ſome bad cuſtom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably loſt. So, on the other ſide, to be engaged in a good cuſtom, is an unſpeakable advantage; eſpecially for children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous courſe, before the habits of ſin and vice have taken root, and are confirmed in them.

againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

But I hope there are few or none ſuch here. They do not uſe to frequent God's houſe and worſhip. And therefore I ſhall apply myſelf to thoſe who are not ſo notoriouſly guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good education of their children. And, for the greater conviction of ſuch parents, I ſhall offer to them the following conſiderations.

1. Conſider what a ſad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have tranſmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vitious inclinations: you have begotten them in your own image and likeneſs, ſo that *by nature* they are *children of wrath*. Now, methinks, parents, that have a due ſenſe of this, ſhould be very ſolicitous, by the beſt means they can uſe, to free them from that curſe; by endeavouring to correct thoſe perverſe diſpoſitions and curſed inclinations which they have tranſmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken eſtate which from you is deſcended upon them.

When a man hath by treaſon tainted his blood, and forfeited his eſtate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury which hath been done to them by his fault? and how ſolicitous is he, before he die, to petition the King for favour to his children? How earneſtly doth he charge his friends to be careful of them, and kind to them? that, by theſe means, he may make the beſt reparation he can of their fortune, which hath been ruined by his fault.

And have parents ſuch a tenderneſs for their children, in reference to their eſtate and condition in this world? and have they none for the good eſtate of their ſouls, and their eternal condition in another world? If you are ſenſible, that their blood is tainted, and that their beſt fortunes are ruined by your ſad misfortune; why do you not beſtir yourſelves for the repairing of God's image in them? why do you not *travail in birth till Chriſt be formed in them?* why do you not pray earneſtly to God, and give him no reſt, who hath reprieved, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them alſo, and grant them the bleſſings of his new covenant?

All

All your children are begotten of the bond-woman; therefore we ſhould pray as Abraham did, *O that Iſhmael may live in thy ſight!* O that theſe ſons of Hagar may be heirs of a bleſſing!

2. Conſider, in the next place, that good education is the very beſt inheritance that you can leave to your children. It is a wiſe ſaying of Solomon, Eccl. vii. 11. that *wiſdom is good with an inheritance:* but ſurely an inheritance, without wiſdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there, who omit no care and induſtry to get an eſtate, that they may leave it to their children, but uſe no means to form their minds and manners for the right uſe and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great poverty and ſtraits?

Doſt thou love thy child? This is true love to any one, to do the beſt for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good education; all other things are uncertain. You may raiſe your children to honour, and ſettle a noble eſtate upon them to ſupport it: you may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and, by kindneſs and obligation, procure them many friends: and, when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous; and, in the changes and revolutions of the world, their honours may ſlip from under them, and their *riches may take themſelves wings, and fly away:* and when theſe are gone, and they come to be nipped with the froſts of adverſity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. *This is a ſore evil, which yet I have ſeen under the ſun.*

But if the good education of your children hath made them wiſe and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and *cannot be taken from them.* Crates, the philoſopher, uſed to ſtand in the higheſt places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, "O ye people! why do you toil to get "eſtates for your children, when you take no care of "their education?" This is, as Diogenes ſaid, to take care of the ſhoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it;

to

to take great pains for an eſtate for your children, but none at all to teach them how to uſe it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

3. Conſider, that, by a careful and religious education of your children, you provide for your own comfort and happineſs. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conſcience, and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. *A wiſe ſon* (ſaith Solomon) *maketh a glad father.* It is a great ſatisfaction to ſee that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and induſtry, and that the work of our hands doth proſper. The ſon of Sirach, among ſeveral things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the firſt place, *He that hath joy of his children,* Ecclus xxv. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful poſterity is a proſpect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more laſting monument of ourſelves, than in wiſe and virtuous children. Buildings and books are but dead things, in compariſon of theſe living memorials of ourſelves.

By the good education of your children, you provide for yourſelves ſome of the beſt comforts, both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at ſuch a time when you moſt ſtand in need of comfort, I mean the time of ſickneſs and old age. Wiſe men have been wont to lay up ſome *præſidia ſenectutis*, ſomething to ſupport them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no ſuch external comfort at ſuch a time as good and dutiful children. They will then be the *light of our eyes*, and the cordial of our fainting ſpirits; and will recompenſe all our former care of them by their preſent care of us: and when we are decaying and withering away, we ſhall have the pleaſure to ſee our youth, as it were, renewed, and ourſelves flouriſhing again in our children. The ſon of Sirach, ſpeaking of the comfort which a good father hath in a well educated ſon, *Though he die*, (ſays he), *yet he is as though he were not dead: for he hath left one behind him*

him that is like himself. While he lived, he saw and rejoiced in him; and when he died, he was not sorrowful, Ecclus xxx. 4. 5.

Whereas, on the contrary, *a foolish son is* (as Solomon tells us) *a heaviness to his mother*; the miscarriage of a child being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their children, do, as it were, provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious children are, to their infirm and aged parents, so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age. They help to bow them down, and to *bring their gray hairs* so much the sooner *with sorrow to the grave.* They do usually repay their parents all the neglects of their education, by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment, to be able to say to him, *Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me*; how will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our heads with joy in that day?

4. Consider, that the surest foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good education of children. Families are increased by children, and cities and nations are made up of families. And this is a matter of so great concernment, both to religion and the civil happiness of a nation, that anciently the best constituted commonwealths did commit this care to the magistrate more than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children for hostages, they offered rather to deliver to him twice as many men; so much did they value the loss of their country's education. But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon parents. There are several ways of reforming men, by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the publick preaching of ministers; but the most likely and hopeful reformation of the world must begin with children. Wholsome laws and good sermons are but slow and late ways. The timely and the most compendious way is, good education. This may be an effectual prevention of evil: whereas all after-ways

ter-ways are but remedies, which do always ſuppoſe ſome neglect and omiſſion of timely care.

And becauſe our laws leave ſo much to parents, our care ſhould be ſo much the greater: and we ſhould remember, that we bring up our children for the publick; and that, if they live to be men, as they come out of our hands, they will prove a publick happineſs or miſchief to the age. So that we can no way better deſerve of mankind, and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good children are the hopes of poſterity; and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well-diſciplined children. This gives the world the beſt ſecurity, that religion will be propagated to poſterity, and that the *generations to come ſhall know God; and the children that are to be born, ſhall fear the Lord.*

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being *the friend of God*, that he was *the father of the faithful.* And the careful education of children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is ſo honourable to parents, that God himſelf would not paſs it by in Abraham without ſpecial mention of it to his everlaſting commendation: *I know Abraham*, (ſays God), *that he will command his children, and his houſhold after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do juſtice and judgment*, Gen. xviii. 19.

5. Conſider yet further the great evils conſequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But, not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miſcarriage and ruin of children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to itſelf, and it will take its own courſe; and the end of it, in all probability, will be miſerable.

If the generous ſeeds of religion and virtue be not carefully ſown in the tender minds of children, and thoſe ſeeds be not cultivated by good education, there will certainly ſpring up briers and thorns; of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences, but every body elſe that comes near them.

Neglectis urenda filix innaſcitur agris.

If the ground be not planted with ſomething that is good,

good, it will bring forth that which is either uſeleſs or hurtful, or both: for nature is ſeldom barren; it will either bring forth uſeful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclined to evil; and the neglect of education puts children upon a kind of neceſſity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will ſoon be habituated to ſin and vice. And when they are once accuſtomed to do evil, they have loſt their liberty and choice. They are then hardly capable of good counſel and inſtruction; or, if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their ſins, and led captive by Satan at his pleaſure. And, when they have brought themſelves into this condition, their ruin ſeems to be ſealed; and, without a miracle of God's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the miſchief of this neglect end here; but it extends itſelf to the publick, and to poſterity. If we neglect the good education of our children, they will, in all probability, prove bad men; and theſe will neglect their children: and ſo the foundation of an endleſs miſchief is laid; and our poſterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of inſtruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous; either they will not mind religion, or they will diſturb the church with new and wild opinions. And I fear that the neglect of inſtructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been ſo groſsly guilty, hath made it ſo fruitful of errors and ſtrange opinions.

But if, beſides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and peſts of human ſociety, and ſo much poiſon and infection let abroad into the world.

6. and laſtly, Parents ſhould often conſider, that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience, and ſhame, and ſorrow of their childrens miſcarriage, but in a great meaſure in the guilt of it: they will have a great ſhare in all the evil they do, and be in ſome ſort chargeable with all the ſins they commit. If the children bring forth wild and ſowre grapes, the parents teeth will be ſet on edge.

The

The temporal miſchiefs and inconveniences which come from the careleſs education of children, as to credit, health, and eſtate, all which do uſually ſuffer by the vitious and lewd courſes of your children; theſe, methinks, ſhould awaken your care and diligence. But what is this to the guilt which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedneſs will be put upon your ſcore; and poſſibly the ſins which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other world, and bring new fuel to hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents muſt one day be accountable for all their neglects of their children: and ſo likewiſe ſhall miniſters and maſters of families, for their people and ſervants, ſo far as they had the charge of them.

And what will parents be able to ſay to God at the day of judgment, for all their neglects of their children, in matter of inſtruction, and example, and reſtraint from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God ſhall ariſe terribly to judgment, and ſay to you, "Behold, the children which I have given you; they "were ignorant, and you inſtructed them not; they "made themſelves vile, and you reſtrained them not. "Why did you not teach them at home, and bring them "to church, to the publick ordinances and worſhip of "God, and train them up to the exerciſe of piety and "devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them "good inſtruction, but you gave them bad example: "and lo, they have followed you to hell, to be an ad"dition to your torment there.

"Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, and, "by your neglect, deſtroyed thoſe, whoſe happineſs, by "ſo many bonds of duty and affection, you were obliged "to procure. Behold, the books are now open, and "there is not one prayer upon record that ever you put "up for your children: there is no memorial, no not "ſo much as of one hour, that ever was ſeriouſly ſpent "to train them up to a ſenſe of God, and to the know"ledge of their duty; but, on the contrary, it appears, "that you have many ways contrived their miſery, and "contributed to their ruin, and helped forward their "damnation.

" damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? how " could you thus hate your own flesh, and hate your " own souls? How much better had it been for them, " and how much better for you, that they had never " been born? "

Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls, to have your children challenge you in that day; and say to you, one by one, " Had you been as careful to teach me the good know- " ledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it; " had you been but as forward to instruct me in my du- " ty, as I was ready to have hearkened to it, it had not " been with me as it is at this day; I had not now stood " trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal " doom which is just ready to be passed upon me. Cur- " sed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave " me suck: it is to you that I must in a great measure " owe my everlasting undoing? " Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our children in that great and terrible day of the Lord?

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would, by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious education of their children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus concerning Herod, " Better be his dog than his child. " I think it was spoken to another purpose; but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of. Better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses, than their children: for they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their children for eternal happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *train up a child in the way he should go*, that *when he is old, he may not depart from it*; that neither your children may be miserable by your fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty toward them. God grant, that all that are concerned

may lay theſe things ſeriouſly to heart, for his mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt. To whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LIV.

Of the advantages of an early piety.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in the year 1662.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

IN the former diſcourſes, concerning the education of children, I have carried the argument through the ſtate of childhood to the beginning of the next ſtep of their age, which we call *youth*, when they come to exerciſe their reaſon, and to be fit to take upon themſelves the performance of that ſolemn vow which was made for them by their ſureties in baptiſm.

To encourage them to ſet ſeriouſly and in good earneſt about this work, I ſhall now add another diſcourſe concerning the advantages of an early piety. And to this purpoſe I have choſen for the foundation of it theſe words of Solomon, in his book called *Eccleſiaſtes*, or *The Preacher: Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.*

It will not be neceſſary to give an account of the context, any further than to tell you, that this book of the Royal preacher is a lively deſcription of the vanity of the world in general, and particularly of the life of man. This is the main body of his ſermon; in which there are here and there ſcattered many ſerious reflexions upon ourſelves, and very weighty conſiderations to quicken our

our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkneſs, which will be many*; as the Preacher tells us in the chapter before the text.

Among theſe is the admonition and advice in the words of the text; which do indeed concern thoſe that are young, but yet will afford uſeful matter of meditation to perſons of all ages and conditions whatſoever; of great thankfulneſs to almighty God, from thoſe who, by the grace of God, and his bleſſing upon a pious education, have entered upon a religious courſe betimes; and of a deep ſorrow and repentance, to thoſe who have neglected and let ſlip this beſt opportunity of their lives, and of taking up a firm reſolution of redeeming that loſs, as much as is poſſible, by their future care and diligence: and to them more eſpecially who are grown old, and have not yet begun this great and neceſſary work, it will miniſter occaſion to reſolve upon a ſpeedy retreat, and, without any further delay, to return to God and their duty, leſt the opportunity of doing it, which is now almoſt quite ſpent, be loſt for ever.

The text contains a duty, which is, to *remember our Creator;* and a limitation of it more eſpecially to one particular age and time of our life; *in the days of our youth:* not to exclude any other age, but to lay a particular emphaſis and weight upon this. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;* that is, more eſpecially in this age of thy life; to intimate to us, both that this is the fitteſt ſeaſon, and that we cannot begin this work too ſoon.

And this is further illuſtrated by the oppoſition of it to old age: *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh of which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.* This is a deſcription of old age, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which, in reſpect of the cares and griefs, the diſtempers and infirmities which uſually attend it, is rather a burden than a pleaſure.

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. I ſhall conſider the nature of the act or duty here injoined; and that is, to *remember God.*

2. I ſhall conſider what there is in the notion of God

as *Creator*, which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of him.

3. I ſhall conſider the limitation of this duty more eſpecially to this particular age of our lives, *the days of our youth*; why we ſhould begin this work then, and not put it off to the time of old age.

I. I ſhall conſider the nature of the act or duty here injoined; which is, to *remember our Creator*. For the underſtanding of which expreſſion, and others of the like nature in ſcripture, it is to be conſidered, that it is very uſual in ſcripture, to expreſs religion, and the whole duty of man, by ſome eminent act, or principle, or part of religion: ſometimes by *the knowledge of God*, and by *faith in him*; and very frequently by *the fear*, and by *the love of God*; becauſe theſe are the great principles and parts of religion: and ſo likewiſe, though not ſo frequently, religion is expreſſed by *the remembrance of God*. Now, *remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To *remember God*, is to have him actually in our minds, and, upon all proper occaſions, to revive the thoughts of him; and, as David expreſſeth it, to *ſet him always before us*: *I ſet the Lord* (ſays he) *always before me*; that is, God was continually preſent to his mind and thoughts.

And, in oppoſition to this, we find wicked men in ſcripture deſcribed by the contrary quality, *forgetfulneſs of God*. So they are deſcribed in Job, chap. viii. 13. *Such are the paths of all that forget God*; that is, of the wicked. And the ſame deſcription David gives of them, Pſal. ix. 17. *The wicked* (ſays he) *ſhall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*. And elſewhere he gives the ſame character of a wicked man, Pſal. x. 4. that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

And the courſe of a religious life is not unfitly expreſſed by our *remembrance of God*. For to remember a perſon or thing, is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting occaſions; to think actually of them, ſo as to do that which the remembrance of them does require or prompt us to. To remember a friend, is to be ready upon occaſion to do him all good offices: to remember a kindneſs and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity:

to

to remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: and, in a word, to remember any thing, is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently, and in our most serious and retired thoughts, to consider, that there is such a being as God is, of all power and perfection, who made us and all other things, and hath given us laws to live by, suitable to our natures; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward or punish us; very often in this world, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God, and of his infinite perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and *will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;* as the preacher tells us in the conclusion of this sermon.

The duty then here required of us is, so soon as we arrive at the use of reason, and the exercise of our understandings, to take God into consideration, and to begin a religious course of life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our days, and the flower and strength of of them, to his service: whilst our mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the being that is above us; and in all our designs and actions, to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. *Remember thy Creator;* that is, honour, fear, love, obey, and serve him; and, in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall in the next place consider, what there is in the notion of God as our *Creator*, that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The text does not barely require us *to remember God;* but to remember him as the author and founder of our beings: *Remember thy Creator.* And there is certainly some particular emphasis in it; so that God,

conſidered under the notion of our Creator, is apt to ſtrike us with a particular regard and awe of him: and that upon a threefold account; as creation is a ſenſible demonſtration to us, 1ſt, of the being; 2dly, of the power; and, 3dly, of the goodneſs of God.

1. Of his being. The creation is of all other the moſt ſenſible and obvious argument of a Deity. Other conſiderations may work upon our reaſon and underſtanding, but this doth, as it were, bring God down to our ſenſes. So often as we look up to heaven, or down upon the earth; upon ourſelves, or into ourſelves; upon the things without us, and round about us; which way ſoever we turn our eyes, we are encountered with plain evidences of a ſuperior being, which made us and all other things: every thing which we behold with our eyes, doth in ſome way or other repreſent God to us, and bring him to our minds, ſo as we cannot avoid the ſight of him if we would. So the Pſalmiſt tells us, Pſal. xix. 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth the work of his hands.* And ſo likewiſe St. Paul, Rom. i. 20. *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

2. As the creation is a demonſtration of God's infinite power. And this conſideration is apt to work upon our fear, the moſt wakeful paſſion of all other in the ſoul of man: inſomuch that the Atheiſt would fain aſcribe the original apprehenſion and belief of a Deity to the natural fears of men: *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor:* "Fear firſt made gods;" and by this means would fain perſuade us, that it is ſo far from being true that God is our Creator, that he is merely the creature of our own vain fear and imagination.

But ſurely this is very unreaſonable. For, if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reaſon why we ſhould ſtand in awe of him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; becauſe he who made us and all other things, if we neglect him, and forget ſo great a benefactor, can as eaſily make us miſerable, or turn us out of being. Therefore *remember thy Creator;* and deſpiſe or forget him at thy utmoſt peril.

3. As

3. As the creation is a demonſtration of the goodneſs of God to his creatures. This conſideration of God as our Creator, doth naturally ſuggeſt to our minds, that his goodneſs brought us into being; and that if being be a benefit, God is the fountain and author of it; that his goodneſs called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; for *of his good pleaſure we are, and were created.* He was under no neceſſity of doing it; for he was from eternal ages happy in himſelf before we were, and would have been ſo to all eternity, though we had never been; nor was it poſſible he could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And he is not only our Creator, as he gave us our beings at firſt; but likewiſe as we are preſerved and continued in life by the ſame goodneſs which firſt gave us life and breath; for *of his goodneſs we are,* as well as *were created.*

And can we forget ſo great a benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us?* Can we chuſe but remember the founder of our beings, the great patron and preſerver of our lives? And ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of reaſon, and diſcover this great benefactor, to whom we owe our lives, and all the bleſſings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to ſay with David, *O come, let us worſhip, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our maker: for he is the Lord our God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves; we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture?* I proceed to conſider, in the

III. Third and laſt place, the reaſon of the limitation of this duty more eſpecially to this particular age of our lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them. NOW; in the days of thy youth.* By which Solomon plainly deſigns two things.

1. To engage young perſons to begin this great and neceſſary work of religion betimes, and as ſoon as ever they are capable of taking it into conſideration: *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* And the Son of Sirach much to the ſame purpoſe, ſpeaking of one that in good earneſt applies his heart to wiſdom, deſcribes

deſcribes him in this manner, Eccluſ xxxix. 5. *He will give his heart to reſort early to the Lord that made him*; which is the ſame with the expreſſion in the text, of *remembering our Creator in the days of our youth.*

2. To engage young perſons to ſet about this work preſently, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as moſt are apt to do: *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth*: eſpecially, not to adjourn it to the moſt unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old age: *NOW, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them; while the ſun, or the light, or the moon, or the ſtars, be not darkened*, &c.

And how much reaſon there is, to preſs both theſe conſiderations upon young perſons, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, in the following particulars.

1. Becauſe in this age of our lives we have the greateſt and moſt ſenſible obligation to *remember God our Creator: In the days of our youth*, when the bleſſing and benefit of life is new, and the memory of it freſh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be ſo; but we find it true which Seneca ſays, *Nihil citiùs ſeneſcit quàm gratia*, "Nothing ſooner grows old and out of date, than "obligation;" and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greateſt reaſon to remember.

In this age of our life, when we begin to come to the free uſe and exerciſe of our reaſon, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in; and if we were not taught it, we ſhould, though perhaps more ſlowly, diſcover and find it out of ourſelves: I ſay, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in, and inquiſitive about, is, the author of our beings, and how we came into the world. And when God firſt appears to our minds, and we come by degrees clearly to underſtand by whoſe bounty and bleſſing it is that we are, and have been preſerved thus long, without our own care; principally by the providence of God, and, under him, by thoſe inſtruments which he hath raiſed, and preſerved for that purpoſe: when we conſider this, we cannot but be ſtrangely ſurpriſed, both with the novelty of the benefit, and the greatneſs of it.

And

And when we have well viewed ourſelves, and looked about us, upon the creatures below us, all of them ſubject to our dominion and uſe; and when we conſider ſeriouſly in what a noble rank and order of creatures we are placed; and how *fearfully and wonderfully we are made*, not groveling upon the earth, or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright ſhape of body, and ſuch a majeſty of countenance as if we were all kings of the creation; and, which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with minds and underſtandings, with reaſon and ſpeech, whereby we are capable not only of converſing with and benefiting one another, but alſo of the knowledge, and friendſhip, and enjoyment of the beſt and moſt perfect of beings, God himſelf: I ſay, when we firſt conſider this, and meditate ſeriouſly upon it, can we poſſibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that inquiry which Elihu thinks ſo proper for man, that he wonders it is not in every man's mouth, *Where is God my maker, who teacheth me more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh me wiſer than the fowls of heaven?* Job xxxv. 10. 11.

So that there is a very ſpecial obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this age of our lives, when we firſt come to the knowledge of him, and when the ſenſe of his favours is freſh and new to us; and not only ſo, but when the bleſſing of life is at the very beſt, and in its verdure and flower; when our health is in its ſtrength and vigour, and the pleaſures and enjoyments of life have their full taſte and perfect reliſh. So Job deſcribes the days of his youth, chap. xxix. 2. 3. 4. *Oh that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; when his candle ſhined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkneſs: as I was in the days of my youth*, &c.

Indeed, when *the evil days* are once *come*, and thou art entered upon *the years* in which *thou* thyſelf *haſt no pleaſure*, there might be ſome ſort of pretence then to forget God; becauſe then life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloſs and beauty, but even the comfort and ſweetneſs of it, is gone; and it becomes an inſipid and taſteleſs thing. *But thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoever thou art*, if thou art unmindful of God in the

the beſt age of thy life, and when the ſenſe of his benefits ought, upon all accounts, to make the ſtrongeſt and deepeſt impreſſions upon thy mind.

2. The reaſon will be yet ſtronger to put us upon this, if we conſider, that, notwithſtanding the great obligation which lies upon us, to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, we are moſt apt at that time, of all other, to forget him. For that which is the great bleſſing of youth, is alſo the great danger of it; I mean the health and proſperity of it: and though men have then leaſt reaſon, yet they are moſt apt to forget God, in the height of pleaſure, and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleaſure, becauſe it is moſt capable and moſt ſenſible of it; and where we are moſt apt to be tranſported, there we are moſt apt to tranſgreſs. Nothing does ſo beſot the mind, and extinguiſh in it all ſenſe of divine things, as ſenſual pleaſures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from religion, and ſteal away our hearts from God: *For no man can ſerve two maſters*; and *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God.*

Beſides that youth is raſh and inconſiderate, becauſe unexperienced; and, conſequently, not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concernments of this temporal life; much leſs of that which ſeems to be at ſo much a greater diſtance, and for that reaſon is ſo very ſeldom in our thoughts.

3. Becauſe this age is of all other the fitteſt and beſt to begin a religious courſe of life. And this does not contradict the former argument, though it ſeems to do ſo: for, as it is true of children, that they are moſt prone to be idle, and yet fitteſt to learn; ſo in the caſe we are ſpeaking of, both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to ourſelves, to forget God and religion, and yet at the ſame time fitteſt to receive the impreſſions of it.

Youth is *ætas diſciplinæ*, "the proper age of diſci-" pline;" very obſequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impreſſion, and to imbibe any tincture. Now, we ſhould lay hold of this golden opportunity. This age of ſuppleneſs, and obedience, and patience for labour, ſhould be plied by parents, before that rigour and

and ſtiffneſs which grows with years come on too faſt. Childhood and youth are choice ſeaſons for the planting of religion and virtue; and if parents and teachers ſleep in this ſeed-time, they are ill huſbandmen: for this *is the time of plowing and ſowing.*

This age is certainly the moſt proper for inſtruction; according to that of the Prophet, Iſ. xxviii. 9. 10. *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts. For precept muſt be upon precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a little.* And the ſooner this is done, the better; only things muſt be inſtilled into them gently, and by degrees.

It is a noted ſaying of Ariſtotle, "That young perſons are not fit to hear lectures of moral philoſophy;" becauſe at that age paſſion is ſo predominant and unruly: by which, I think, he only means, that the minds of young perſons are leaſt prepared to receive the precepts of morality, and to ſubmit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be uſed to form the minds and manners of youth to virtue and goodneſs. He certainly underſtood the nature and power of evil habits too well to be of that mind; and conſequently muſt think, that the principles of morality ought, with great care and diligence, to be inſtilled into young perſons betimes; becauſe they, of all other, have the moſt need of this kind of inſtruction, and this age is the moſt proper ſeaſon for it: and the leſs their minds are prepared for it, ſo much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and ſubdue their paſſions, before they grow too ſtiff and headſtrong. So that if the ſeeds of religion and virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old age? according to that of the ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xxv. 3. *If thou haſt gathered nothing in thy youth, how canſt thou expect to find any thing in thine age?*

Young years are tender and eaſily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any faſhion; they are *udum & molle lutum*; like "moiſt and ſoft clay," which is pliable to any form, but ſoon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impreſſions

preſſions upon age, and to deface the evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good inſtruction hath been neglected at firſt, a conceited ignorance doth commonly take poſſeſſion, and obſtruct all the paſſages through which knowledge and wiſdom ſhould enter into us.

Upon this conſideration, the work of religion ſhould be begun betimes; becauſe it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is juſt the ſame thing for young perſons to be entered into a religious courſe, and to have their minds habituated to virtue before vitious cuſtoms have got place and ſtrength in us: for whoever ſhall attempt this afterwards, will meet with infinite difficulty and oppoſition, and muſt diſpute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which muſt be done one time or other, when it is eaſieſt to be done; when we may do it with the greateſt advantage, and are likely to meet with the leaſt and weakeſt oppoſition. We ſhould anticipate vice, and prevent the devil and the world, by letting God into our hearts betimes, and giving religion the firſt ſeiſin and poſſeſſion of our ſouls. This is the time of ſowing our ſeed, which muſt by no means be neglected: for the ſoul will not lie fallow; good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by religion, ſin and vice will get the poſſeſſion of them: but if our tender years be ſeaſoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following courſe of our lives.

In a word, this age of our lives is proper for labour and conflict; becauſe youth is full of heat and vigour, of courage and reſolution, to enterprize and effect difficult things.

This heat indeed renders young perſons very unfit to adviſe and direct themſelves; and therefore they have need to be adviſed and directed by thoſe who are wiſer and more experienced: but yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at counſel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickneſs, of courage and conſtancy in the way wherein they are ſet.

Beſides

Beſides that youth hath a great ſenſe of honour and virtue, of praiſe and commendation, which are of great force to engage young perſons to attempt worthy and excellent things: for hope and confidence, ſtrength and courage, with which ſenſe of honour and deſire of praiſe are apt to inſpire them, are admirable inſtruments of victory and maſtery in any kind: and theſe are proper and moſt peculiar to youth: *I write unto you, young men,* (ſaith St. John), *becauſe ye are ſtrong, and have overcome the evil one.*

And, beſides the ſpirit and vigour of youth, young perſons have ſeveral other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, becauſe they have not been often deceived: and this is a very good quality in a learner. And they are full of hopes; which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their ſtrength; becauſe hope is always of the future, and the life of young perſons is in a great meaſure before them, and yet to come. And, which is a good bridle to reſtrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modeſt and baſhful: and, which is alſo a ſingular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honeſt and commendable, than that which is gainful and profitable; being in a great meaſure free from *the love of money*, which experience, as well as the Apoſtle, tells us, *is the root of all evil.* Children are very ſeldom covetous, becauſe they have ſeldom been bitten by want.

4. This is the moſt acceptable time of all other, becauſe it is the firſt of our age. Under the law, the firſt fruits and the firſt-born were God's: in like manner, we ſhould devote the firſt of our age and time to him. God is the firſt and moſt excellent of beings; and therefore it is fit that the prime of our age, and the excellency of our ſtrength, ſhould be dedicated to him and his ſervice.

An early piety muſt needs be very acceptable and pleaſing to God. Our bleſſed Lord took great pleaſure to ſee *little children come unto him;* an emblem of the pleaſure he takes that men ſhould liſt themſelves betimes in his ſervice. St. John was the youngeſt of all the diſciples, and our Saviour had a very particular kindneſs and af-

fection for him; for he is said to be *the disciple whom Jesus loved.*

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good days, and the years which we ourselves have pleasure in; and that we have a grateful sense of his benefits, and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickest and best returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to him from whom we have received all.

It is likewise an argument of great sincerity, which is the soul of all religion and virtue, when a man devotes himself to God betimes; because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints, or driven to God by that pressing necessity which lies upon men in time of sickness and old age. And, on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God, to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our age. When our blood is warm, and our spirits quick, and our parts are at the best, then to think ourselves too good to serve God, what an affront is this to him, who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do?

Besides that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of young persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that age. Early habits of virtue, like new cloaths upon a young and comely body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shap'd mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a great and old sinner; so it cannot but be a very delightful spectacle to God and angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to see a young person besieged by powerful temptations on every side, to acquit himself gloriously, and resolutely to hold out against the most violent assaults: to behold one, in the prime and flower of his age, that is courted by pleasures and honours, by the devil, and all the bewitching vanities of this world, to reject all these, and to cleave stedfastly to God; nay, to frown upon all these temptations, and to look down upon them with indignation and scorn; and to say, Let those

thoſe doat upon theſe things, who know no better; let them adore ſenſual pleaſures and lying vanities, who are ignorant of the ſincere and ſolid pleaſures of religion and virtue; let them run into the arms of temptation, who can forget God their creator, their preſerver, and *the guide of their youth:* as for me, I will ſerve the Lord, and will employ my whole time, either innocently or uſefully, in ſerving God, and in doing good to men, who are made after the image of God. This work ſhall take up my whole life; there ſhall be no void or empty ſpace in it; I will endeavour, as much as poſſibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the devil and his temptations to enter in. Lord, I will be thine; I have choſen thee for my happineſs and *my portion for ever: Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee. Lo, they that are far from thee, ſhall periſh: but it is good for me to draw near to God;* to begin and end my days in his fear, and to his glory.

5. and laſtly, This age of our life may, for any thing we know, be the only time we may have for this purpoſe; and if we caſt off the thoughts of God, and defer the buſineſs of religion to old age, intending, as we pretend, to ſet about it at that time, we may be cut off before that time comes, and *turned into hell, with the people that forget God.*

The work of religion is the moſt neceſſary of all other; and muſt be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too ſoon; but we may eaſily delay it too long; and then we are miſerable paſt all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal ſoul and put his everlaſting happineſs upon the greateſt hazard and uncertainty, muſt make religion his firſt buſineſs and care, muſt think of God betimes, and *remember his Creator in the days of his youth.*

I have now done with the three things which I propoſed to conſider from theſe words. The inferences from this whole diſcourſe ſhall be theſe two:

1. To perſuade thoſe that are young, to *remember* God *their Creator*, and to engage in the ways of religion and virtue betimes.

2. To urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt

opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, and return to a better mind, leſt the opportunity be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and paſt remedy.

1. To perſuade thoſe that are young, to *remember* God *their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the ways of religion and virtue. Do not ſuffer yourſelves to be cheated and bewitched by ſenſual ſatisfactions, and to be deſtroyed by eaſe and proſperity. Let not a perpetual tenure of health and pleaſure ſoften and diſſolve your ſpirits, and baniſh all wiſe and ſerious thoughts out of your minds. Be not ſo fooliſh and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is moſt mindful of you; *when the candle of the Lord ſhines about your tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health, and ſtrength, and ſweetneſs of life.

No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable treaſure he prodigally waſtes, when he lets ſlip this golden ſeaſon and opportunity of his life; whilſt he is yet innocent and untainted with ſin and vice, and his mind is clear of all bad impreſſions, and capable of the beſt; not inſlaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Conſider, that the ways of religion and virtue are nothing ſo difficult and unpleaſant now, as they will be hereafter; and that the longer you forget God, and the more you are eſtranged from him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him, and to return to him; that your luſts will every day gain more ſtrength, and your hearts by degrees will contract ſuch a ſtiffneſs and hardneſs, that it will be no eaſy matter to work upon them.

Therefore *remember your Creator in the days of your youth; to day, whilſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* When will you think of beginning a good courſe, if not now? You have a great work before you, which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finiſhed at once. Your whole life is no more than ſufficient for it, to do it to the beſt advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your life, much leſs of putting it off to the very end of it. When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Conſider further, if we will deny God the hearty and vigorous ſervice of our beſt days, how can we expect, that

that he will accept the faint and flattering devotions of old age? Wise men are wont to forecast and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that time; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy evening; that what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction, may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflexions upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well-spent life.

But, on the other hand, if we have neglected religion, and forgotten God, days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vitious life, we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our sorrow and anguish against an evil day; and have foolishly contrived to make our burden then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it, and when we shall be utterly disheartened from setting about so vast a work, of which we can see no end, and yet have so very little time for it, that, if we do any thing at all in it, we shall be forced to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signify but very little, either to our present comfort or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the day of your prosperity, and in the best age of your life, and yet, when the day of affliction and the infirmities of age come upon you, would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldst not have him *cast thee off in thine old age, and forsake thee when thy strength fails*, do thou *remember him in the days of thy youth*, in the prime and vigour of thine age: *for this is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.*

Therefore *acquaint thyself with him, and remember him now, in the days of thy youth.* Defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment. Begin it just now, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it before *the evil days come*; before *the sun, and the moon,*

and the ſtars be darkened, and all the comforts and joys of life be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O man, whoſoever thou art; *for God is not mocked*. He will not be put off by us with *the days in which we ourſelves have no pleaſure*. Offer up thyſelf *a living ſacrifice*, and not a carcaſe, if thou wouldſt be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the living God, by offering up to him faint ſpirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us, in giving us the beſt bleſſings of life, and all things richly to enjoy; and do we grudge him the moſt valuable part of our lives, and the years which we ourſelves have pleaſure in? *Do we thus requite the Lord? fooliſh people and unwiſe!* Is the giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good? *If we offer up the lame in ſacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor, and try if he will be pleaſed with thee, and accept thy perſon.* Hath God deſerved ſo ill at our hands, that we ſhould forget and neglect him? and hath the devil deſerved ſo well of us, that we ſhould be contented to ſpend the beſt part of our lives in his ſervice, which is perfect ſlavery? Was he our creator, or can he make us happy? nay, does he not carry on a moſt malicious deſign, to make us for ever miſerable?

2. Let me urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, and return to a better mind, leſt all opportunity of doing it be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and paſt remedy. Reſolve to redeem, if it be poſſible, the time which you ſhould have improved. You have ſquandered away too much already, waſte no more of this precious opportunity of life. You have deferred a neceſſary work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude yourſelves with vain hopes, that this work may be done at any time, and in an inſtant; and that if you can but faſhion your laſt breath into, *Lord, have mercy upon me*, this will prevail with God, and make atonement for the long courſe of a wicked and ſinful life. What ſtrange thoughts have men of God and heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of ſin, and the great eaſineſs of repentance, that can impoſe upon themſelves at this rate?

Bethink

Bethink yourſelves better in time; *conſider, and ſhew your ſelves men.* What will you do in the day of your diſtreſs, who have neglected God in your moſt flouriſhing and proſperous condition? what will you ſay to him in a dying hour, who ſcarce ever had one ſerious thought of him all your life? Can you have the face at that time to beſpeak him in this manner: "Lord, "now the world and my luſts have left me, and I feel "myſelf ready to ſink into eternal perdition, I lay hold "upon thy mercy, to deliver my ſoul from going down "into the pit. I have heard ſtrange things of thy good- "neſs, and that thou art merciful even to a miracle. "This is that which I always truſted to, that, af- "ter a long life of ſin and vanity, thou wouldſt at laſt "be pacified with a few penitent words and ſighs at "the hour of death. Let me not, I pray thee, be diſ- "appointed of this hope, and put to confuſion?"

Is this an addreſs fit to be made to a wiſe man, much leſs to the all-wiſe and juſt judge of the world? And yet this ſeems to be the plain interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual ſinner to almighty God in his laſt extremity, and when he is juſt giving up the ghoſt, and going to appear before his dreadful tribunal.

I ſay again, let no man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with falſe notions of a ſlight and ſudden repentance; as if heaven were an hoſpital, founded on purpoſe to receive all ſick and maimed perſons; that when they can live no longer to the luſts of the fleſh, and the ſinful pleaſures of this world, can but put up a cold and formal petition, to be admitted there.

No, no: as ſure as God is true, they ſhall never ſee the kingdom of God, who, inſtead of ſeeking it in the firſt place, make it their laſt refuge and retreat; and, when they find themſelves under the ſentence of death and damnation, only to avoid preſent execution, and ſince there is no other remedy, do at laſt bethink themſelves of getting to heaven, and fall upon their knees to petition the great judge of the world, that they may be tranſported thither.

Can any man in reaſon expect that ſuch a petition will be granted? I tell you nay; but except you repent ſooner,

er, and at a fitter time, and after a better faſhion, you ſhall certainly periſh. As much as God deſires the ſalvation of men, he will not proſtitute heaven, and ſet the gates of it wide open to thoſe who only fly to it in extremity, but never ſought it in good earneſt, nor indeed do now care for it or deſire it for any other reaſon, but to excuſe them from going to hell. They have no value for heaven, becauſe they are in no ways fit for it; but yet they think hell to be the worſe place of the two.

The ever bleſſed God is himſelf abundantly ſufficient for his own happineſs, and does not need our company to make any addition to it: nor yet is heaven ſo deſolate a place, or ſo utterly void of inhabitants, that, like ſome newly diſcovered plantation, it ſhould be glad to receive the moſt vile and profligate perſons, the ſcum and refuſe of mankind. There are an innumerable company of glorious angels, much nobler creatures than the beſt of men, to people thoſe bleſſed regions: *Thouſands of thouſands* continually *ſtand before God, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand miniſter unto him.*

We do abſolutely ſtand in need of God to make us happy; but he hath no need of us to help him to be ſo. God indeed is ſo good, as to deſire our happineſs as earneſtly as if it were neceſſary to his own: but he is happy in and from himſelf; and without him it is impoſſible we ſhould be happy; nay, we muſt of neceſſity be for ever miſerable.

To conclude: If we would have God to accept us in a dying hour, and our bleſſed Saviour to *remember us*, now *he is in his kingdom*, let us think of him betimes, and *acquaint ourſelves with him; that we may be at peace, now*, before *the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when we ſhall ſay, we have no pleaſure in them.*

O that men were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end! Which God of his infinite goodneſs grant that we may all ſeriouſly lay to heart, *in this our day*; and may *learn* betimes *ſo to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom*; for his mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The

The RULE of FAITH:

OR,

An ANSWER to the treatise of Mr. *I. S.* intitled, *Sure footing*, &c.

To my honoured and learned friend Dr. STILLINGFLEET.

SIR,

I Have, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, read over your book, which I find in every part answerable to its title, viz. A rational account of the grounds of the Protestant religion. *And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a publick benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a discourse, intitled,* Sure footing in Christianity. *And although I have no small prejudice against books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain animadversions on some passages in your book which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which animadversions, I found, that the author of them had attacked (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main discourses; which, because they are in great vogue among some of his own party, and do, with an unusual kind of confidence and ostentation, pretend to the newest and most exact fashion of writing controversy, as being all along demonstrative, and built upon self-evident principles; therefore I resolved thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover, if I could, upon what so firm and solid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.*

But, before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter from the author of Sure footing *to his answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his answer. In which letter, though there be many things liable to great exception; yet, because I am unwilling to be diverted*

diverted from the main queſtion, I ſhall not argue with him about any of thoſe matters; only take leave to uſe the ſame liberty in managing my anſwer, which he hath aſſumed to himſelf in preſcribing laws to me about it: therefore, without taking any further notice of his letter, I addreſs myſelf to his book.

PART I.

The explication and ſtate of the queſtion.

SECT. I. *The explication of the terms of the queſtion.*

§ 1. THE queſtion he propounds to himſelf to debate, is, "What is the rule of faith?" In order to the reſolution whereof, he endeavours,

Firſt, To fix the true notion of theſe two terms, *rule*, and *faith*: which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reaſonable; but I can by no means think his explication of thoſe terms to be ſufficient. He tells us, that "a rule is that which is able to regulate "or guide him that uſeth it." In which deſcription, as in many other paſſages of his book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. Whitby, *p.* 180.; that is, the confounding of *a rule* and *a guide*, by making *regulating* and *guiding* to be equivalent words. But for this I am no further concerned, than to take notice of it by the way. The fault which I find in this definition, is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; ſo that no man is the wiſer for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Engliſhmen what a rule is; and, for their clearer underſtanding of this word, he explains it by a word leſs removed from the Latin, "A rule is that which is able to "regulate him that uſeth it:" juſt as if a man ſhould go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by ſaying, "He "is one that hath the power of legiſlation." Of the two he had much better have ſaid, that "a rule is a "thing

"thing that is able to rule him that uſeth it;" though this be nothing but an explication of the ſame word by itſelf.

§ 2. Not much better is his explication of the term *faith*, which he tells us, "in the common ſenſe of mankind is the ſame with believing." He declared indeed beforehand, *p.* 4. that he did not "intend to give "rigorous ſchool-definitions of either this or the former "word;" and, to do him right, he hath not in the leaſt ſwerved from his intention. It were to be wiſhed he had prefaced ſome ſuch thing to his demonſtrations; for the reader will find, that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions: the latter of which doth very much reſemble the countryman's way of defining, who, being aſked by his neighbour what an invaſion was, after ſome ſtudy, told him very gravely, that "an invaſion was "as if he ſhould ſay an invaſion." In like manner Mr. S. tells us, that "faith (or, which is all one, be"lief) is the ſame with believing;" which, in my apprehenſion, is but a country-definition, unleſs the interpoſing of thoſe ſolemn words, "in the common ſenſe of "mankind," may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. ſays in his tranſition, (as he calls it), where he gives the reader an account what feats he hath done in his book: "He will ſee, (ſays he, "*p.* 159.), I take my riſe at the meaning of the words "*rule* and *faith*; this known, I eſtabliſh my firſt prin"ciples in this preſent matter to be theſe, *viz.* A rule is "a rule; Faith is faith." This is the right ſelf-evident method he talks ſo much of, and his principles agree admirably well with his definitions. If he had but proceeded in the ſame method, and added, That a rule of faith is a rule of faith; that oral tradition is oral tradition; and, That to ſay oral tradition is the rule of faith, is as much as to ſay, oral tradition is the rule of faith, the whole buſineſs had been concluded without any more ado; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him.

§ 3. Rejecting then his way of definition, as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things; I ſhall endeavour to explain a little better, if I can, the meaning of theſe terms.

A *rule* (when we ſpeak of a rule of faith) is a metaphorical word, which, in its firſt and proper ſenſe, being applied to material and ſenſible things, is the meaſure according to which we judge of the ſtraightneſs and crookedneſs of things; and from hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral or intellectual. A moral rule is the meaſure according to which we judge whether a thing be good or evil; and this kind of rule is that which is commonly called *a law*; and the agreement or diſagreement of our actions to this rule, is, ſuitably to the metaphor, called *rectitude* or *obliquity*. An intellectual rule is the meaſure according to which we judge whether a thing be true or falſe. And this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reaſon, are that general rule according to which we judge whether a thing be true or falſe. The particular principles of every ſcience are the more particular rules according to which we judge whether things in that ſcience be true or falſe. So that the general notion of a rule is, that it is "a meaſure, by the "agreement or diſagreement to which we judge of all "things of that kind to which it belongs."

§ 4. *Faith*, though both among ſacred and profane writers it be uſed many times more generally, for a perſuaſion or aſſent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art uſed by divines, it ſignifies that particular kind of aſſent which is wrought in us by teſtimony or authority: ſo that divine faith, which we are now ſpeaking of, is an aſſent to a thing upon the teſtimony or authority of God; or, which is all one, "an aſſent to a truth upon divine "revelation."

§ 5. A *rule of faith* is the meaſure according to which we judge what matters we are to aſſent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And, more particularly, the rule of Chriſtian faith is the meaſure according to which we are to judge what we ought to aſſent to, as the doctrine revealed by Chriſt to the world, and what not.

§ 6. So that this queſtion, "What is the rule of Chri-"ſtian faith?" ſuppoſeth a doctrine revealed by Chriſt to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by Chriſt to his Apoſtles, and ſufficient

ent confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in the ſame manner publiſhed to the world by the Apoſtles, who likewiſe gave ſufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is neceſſarily ſuppoſed in the queſtion: for it would be in vain to inquire, whether this or that be the rule of Chriſtian faith, if ſuch a thing as the Chriſtian faith were not firſt ſuppoſed. When therefore we inquire, what is the rule of Chriſtian faith? the meaning of that inquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the diſtance of ſo many ages from the time of its firſt delivery? for this being known, we have the rule of faith; that is, a meaſure by which we may judge what we are to aſſent to as the doctrine of Chriſt, and what not. So that, when any queſtion ariſeth about any particular propoſition, whether this be part of Chriſt's doctrine, we may be able by this rule to reſolve it.

Sect. II. *Mr. S.'s rule of faith.*

§ 1. THE next thing to be conſidered is, his reſolution of this queſtion; by which we ſhall know what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; for that being known, the controverſy between us will eaſily be ſtated.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition, in oppoſition to writing, or any other way that can be aſſigned, is the rule of faith. By oral or practical tradition, he means, *p.* 41. "a delivery down from "hand to hand, by words, and a conſtant courſe of fre"quent and viſible actions, conformable to thoſe words, "of the ſenſe and faith of forefathers."

§ 2. Now, that I may bring the controverſy between us to a clear ſtate, I am firſt to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that ſo I may the better underſtand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the ſcriptures, or written tradition: and then I am to lay down the Proteſtant rule of faith, that ſo it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The ſum of what he attributes to oral tradition, ſo far as can be collected out of ſo obſcure

and confuſed a diſcourſe, may be reduced to theſe five heads.

§ 3. *1ſt*, That the doctrine of Chriſtian religion was delivered by Chriſt to the Apoſtles, and by them publiſhed to the world; and that the age which firſt received it from the Apoſtles, delivered it as they received it without any change or corruption to their children, and they to theirs, and ſo it went on ſolely by this way of oral tradition. This is the ſum of his explication of tradition, *diſc.* 5.

§ 4. *2dly*, That this way alone is not only ſufficient to convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only poſſible way that can be imagined of conveying down a doctrine ſecurely from one age to another. And this is the natural reſult of his diſcourſe about the properties of a rule of faith: for if the true properties of a rule of faith do belong to oral tradition, then it is a ſufficient means; and if thoſe properties do ſolely and eſſentially appertain to it, and are incompatible to any thing elſe, as he endeavours to prove, then it is impoſſible there ſhould be any other way.

§ 5. *3dly*, That it is impoſſible this means ſhould fail, or miſs of its end; that is, the doctrine of Chriſt being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither ceaſe to deſcend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its deſcent. This is that which his demonſtrations pretend to prove.

§ 6. *4thly*, That the infallibility of oral tradition, or the impoſſibility of its failing, is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle. This he frequently aſſerts throughout his book.

§ 7. *5thly*, That this way of oral tradition hath *de facto* in all ages been acknowledged by Chriſtians, as the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Chriſtianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the conſent of authority.

§ 8. As for the ſcriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inſpired, and to contain a divine doctrine, even the ſame which is delivered by oral tradition. So he tells us, *p.* 117. "It is cer-

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" tain the Apoſtles taught the ſame doctrine they writ." But then he denies it to be of any uſe without oral tradition, becauſe neither the letter nor ſenſe of it can without that be aſcertained. So he ſaith in his letter to Dr. Caſaubon, *p.* 337. " As for the ſcriptures, (aſcertain-" ing their letter and ſenſe, which is done by tradition), " it is clear they are of incomparable value, not only " for the divine doctrine contained in them; but alſo " for many particular paſſages, whoſe ſource or firſt at-" teſtation not being univerſal, nor their nature much " practical, might poſſibly have been loſt in their con-" veyance down by tradition." Where, though he gives the ſcriptures very good words, it is to be underſtood, provided they will be ſubordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their ſenſe, and their being intelligible and uſeful, to oral tradition: for if any man ſhall preſume to ſay, that this book hath any certain ſenſe without oral tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath indited is ſo written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its ſenſe and interpretation; then the moſt ſcurrilous language is not bad enough for the ſcriptures: then what are thoſe ſacred writings, but " ink variouſly figured in a book?" (*Append.* 4. *p.* 319.); " unſenſed characters, waxen-na-" tured words, not yet ſenſed, nor having any certain " interpreter, but fit to be played upon diverſely by quirks " of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to " clear little or nothing?" (*Ibid. p.* 68.). Theſe, with many other diſgraceful terms, he very liberally beſtows upon the divine oracles: the conſideration whereof, did it not miniſter too much horror, would afford ſome comfort; for by this kind of rude uſage, ſo familiar with him towards his adverſaries, one may reaſonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the ſcriptures among his friends.

§ 9. And whereas he ſaith, that " the ſcriptures have " preſerved many particular paſſages, which, becauſe " their ſource or firſt atteſtation was not univerſal, nor " their nature much practical, might poſſibly have been " loſt in their conveyance down by tradition;" this is impoſſible, according to his hypotheſis: for if neither the ſcripture's letter, nor the certain ſenſe of it, as to

the main body of Chriſtian doctrine, could have been ſecured without oral tradition; that is, if we could not have known, that thoſe paſſages which contain the main points of Chriſt's doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inſpired, or what the ſenſe of them was, but from the conſonancy and agreement of thoſe paſſages with the doctrine which was orally preached by the Apoſtles: how can we be certain either of the letter or ſenſe of other particular paſſages, which muſt neceſſarily want this confirmation from oral tradition; becauſe "their firſt atteſtation was not univerſal, nor their nature much practical?" Nay, his diſcourſe plainly implies, that we can have no ſecurity at all, either of the letter or ſenſe of any other parts of ſcripture, but only thoſe which are coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine; as is evident from theſe words, *p.* 116. "Tradition eſtabliſhed, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to preſerve a copy of the ſcripture's letter truly ſignificative of Chriſt's ſenſe, as far as it is coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine preached at firſt; becauſe ſenſe writ in mens hearts by tradition, can eaſily guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter." This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at: they would correct the outward letter of ſcripture by ſenſe written in their hearts; and then, inſtead of leaving out the ſecond commandment, they would change it into a precept of giving due worſhip to images, according to the council of Trent; and a thouſand other alterations they muſt make in the Bible, to make it truly ſignificative of the ſenſe of their church. But ſurely the outward letter of other paſſages of ſcripture, which were not intended to ſignify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations: and yet the church is not by tradition provided of any way to correct theſe alterations when they happen; becauſe tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furniſh the church with a certain and infallible rule of preſerving a copy of the ſcripture's letter, ſo far as it is coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine.

§ 10. Again, he tells us, *p.* 117. "Tradition eſtabliſhed, the church is provided of a certain and infallible rule to interpret ſcripture-letter by, ſo as to give

" rive certainly at Chriſt's ſenſe, as far as the letter " concerns the body of Chriſtian doctrine preached at " firſt, or points requiſite to ſalvation." So that whatever he may attribute to ſcripture for faſhion's ſake, and to avoid calumny with the vulgar, as he ſays very ingenuouſly in his explication of the 15th corollary; nevertheleſs it is plain, that, according to his own hypotheſis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly uſeleſs and pernicious. That it is altogether uſeleſs according to his hypotheſis, is plain: for the main body of Chriſtian doctrine is ſecurely conveyed to us without it; and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, becauſe it receives all its confirmation from it; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition, and ſenſe written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of ſcripture which are not coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine, we can have no certainty, either that the outward letter is true, nor, if we could, can we poſſibly arrive at any certain ſenſe of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious according to his hypotheſis, is plain; becauſe " every ſilly and upſtart hereſy fathers " itſelf upon it," *p.* 40. and when men leave tradition, as he ſuppoſeth all hereticks do, the ſcripture is the moſt dangerous engine that could have been invented; being to ſuch perſons only " waxen-natured words, not ſen- " ſed, nor having any certain interpreter; but fit to be " played upon diverſely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to " blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing," *p.* 68. And indeed, if his hypotheſis were true, the ſcriptures might well deſerve all the contemptuous language which he uſeth againſt them; and Mr White's compariſon of them with Lilly's almanack, (*Apology for tradition, p.* 165.), would not only be pardonable, but proper; and, unleſs he added it out of prudence, and for the people's ſake, whom he may think too ſuperſtitiouſly conceited of thoſe books, he might have ſpared that cold excuſe which he makes for uſing this ſimilitude, that " it was a- " greeable rather to the impertinency of the objection, " than the dignity of the ſubject." Certain it is, if theſe men are true to their own principles, that notwithſtanding the high reverence and eſteem pretended to be borne

by them and their church to the ſcriptures, they muſt heartily deſpiſe them, and wiſh them out of the way; and even look upon it as a great overſight of the divine providence, to trouble his church with a book, which, if their diſcourſe be of any conſequence, can ſtand Catholicks in no ſtead at all, and is ſo dangerous and miſchievous a weapon in the hands of hereticks.

SECT. III. *The Proteſtant doctrine concerning the rule of faith.*

§ 1. HAving thus taken a view of his opinion, and conſidered how much he attributes to oral tradition, and how little to the ſcriptures; before I aſſail his hypotheſis, I ſhall lay down the Proteſtant rule of faith; not that ſo much is neceſſary for the anſwering of his book, but that he may have no colour of objection, that I proceed altogether in the deſtructive way, and overthrow his principle, as he calls it, without ſubſtituting another in its room. The opinion then of the Proteſtants concerning the rule of faith, is this in general, That thoſe books which we call *the holy ſcriptures*, are the means whereby the Chriſtian doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly underſtand this, together with the grounds of it, which in reaſon he ought to have done before he had forſaken us, I ſhall declare it more particularly in theſe following propoſitions.

§ 2. *1ſt*, That the doctrine of Chriſtian religion was by Chriſt delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them firſt preached to the world, and afterwards by them committed to writing; which writings, or books, have been tranſmitted from one age to another down to us. So far I take to be granted by our preſent adverſaries. That the Chriſtian doctrine was by Chriſt delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them publiſhed to the world, is part of their own hypotheſis. That this doctrine was afterwards by the Apoſtles committed to writing, he alſo grants, *corol.* 29. *p.* 187. "It is certain the Apoſtles taught the ſame doctrine they writ;" and if ſo, it muſt be as certain, that they writ the ſame doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general tenet of the Papiſts, that the ſcriptures do not contain the entire body of Chriſtian doctrine;

ctrine; but that beſides the doctrines contained in ſcripture, there are alſo others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who ſuppoſeth the whole doctrine of Chriſtian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us ſolely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the ſame doctrine is contained in the ſcriptures; only he denies the ſcriptures to be a means ſufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, ſo that we can by them be infallibly aſſured what is Chriſt's doctrine, and what not. Nay, he ſeems in that paſſage I laſt cited to grant this, in ſaying, that the Apoſtles did both teach and write the ſame doctrine. I am ſure, Mr. White, whom he follows very cloſely throughout his whole book, does not deny this in his *Apology for tradition*; where he ſaith, *p.* 171. that "it is not the Catholick poſition, That all its doctrines are not contained in the ſcriptures." And that thoſe writings or books which we call *the holy ſcriptures*, have been tranſmitted down to us, is unqueſtionable matter of fact, and granted univerſally by the Papiſts, as to all thoſe books which are owned by Proteſtants for canonical.

§ 3. *2dly*, That the way of writing is a ſufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of thoſe who live in times very remote from the age of its firſt delivery. According to his hypotheſis, there is no poſſible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and ſecurity beſides that of oral tradition: the falſhood of which will ſufficiently appear, when I ſhall have ſhewn, that the true properties of a rule of faith do agree to the ſcriptures, and not to oral tradition. In the mean time, I ſhall only offer this to his conſideration, that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the ſame words; and that a writing or book which is publick, and in every one's hand, may be conveyed down with at leaſt as much certainty and ſecurity, and with as little danger of alteration, as an oral tradition: and if ſo, I underſtand not what can render it impoſſible for a book to convey down a doctrine to the knowledge of after ages. Beſides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended ſome little inconvenience in making that an eſſential

eſſential part of his hypotheſis, which is contradicted by plain and conſtant experience: for that any kind of doctrine may be ſufficiently conveyed by books to the knowledge of after ages, provided thoſe books be but written intelligibly, and preſerved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I ſhall be ſo bold as to ſuppoſe poſſible), is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there are books. And, ſurely we Chriſtians cannot think it impoſſible to convey a doctrine to poſterity by books, when we conſider that God himſelf pitched upon this way for conveyance of the doctrine of the Jewiſh religion to after ages; becauſe it is not likely, that ſo wiſe an agent ſhould pitch upon a means whereby it was impoſſible he ſhould attain his end.

§ 4. 3*dly*, That the books of ſcripture are ſufficiently plain, as to all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. He that denies this, ought in reaſon to inſtance in ſome neceſſary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in ſome place of ſcripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a ſufficient objection to ſay, *p.* 38. 39. That the greateſt wits among the Proteſtants differ about the ſenſe of thoſe texts, wherein the generality of them ſuppoſe the divinity of Chriſt to be plainly and clearly expreſſed: becauſe, if nothing were to be accounted ſufficiently plain, but what it is impoſſible a great wit ſhould be able to wreſt to any other ſenſe, not only the ſcriptures, but all other books, and, which is worſt of all to him that makes this objection, all oral tradition would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditionary church pretend, that the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expreſſed in ſcripture? I would fain know what plainer words ſhe ever uſed to expreſs this point of faith by, than what the ſcripture uſeth; which expreſsly calls him *God, the true God, God over all bleſſed for evermore*. If it be ſaid, That thoſe who deny the divinity of Chriſt have been able to evade theſe and all other texts of ſcripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is eaſily anſwered, That the ſame arts would equally have eluded both: but there was no reaſon why they ſhould trouble themſelves

themſelves ſo much about the latter; for why ſhould they be ſolicitous to wreſt the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church's authority? If thoſe great wits, as he calls them, had believed the ſayings of ſcripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of councils, they would have anſwered texts of ſcripture as they have done the definitions of councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another ſenſe, but by downright denying their authority. So that it ſeems that oral tradition is liable to the ſame inconvenience with the written as to this particular.

§ 5. And of this I ſhall give him a plain inſtance in two great wits of their church, the preſent Pope and Mr. White; the one, the head of the traditionary church, as Mr. S. calls it; the other, the great maſter of the traditionary doctrine. Theſe two great wits, the Pope and Mr. White, notwithſtanding the plainneſs of oral tradition, and the impoſſibility of being ignorant of it, or miſtaking it, have yet been ſo unhappy as to differ about ſeveral points of faith; inſomuch that Mr. White is unkindly cenſured for it at Rome; and perhaps here, in England, the Pope ſpeeds no better. However, the difference continues ſtill ſo wide, that Mr. White hath thought fit to diſobey the ſummons of his chief paſtor; and, like a prudent man, rather to write againſt him here, out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains, againſt a practical tradition which they have at Rome, of killing hereticks.

Methinks Mr. S. might have ſpared his brags, *p.* 54. that he "hath evinced from clear reaſon, that it is far "more poſſible to make a man not to be, than not "to know what is riveted into his ſoul by ſo oft re-"peated ſenſations, (as the Chriſtian faith is by oral "and practical tradition); and that it exceeds all the "power of nature, abſtracting from the caſes of mad-"neſs and violent diſeaſe, to blot knowledge, thus fix-"ed, out of the ſoul of one ſingle believer; inſomuch "that ſooner may all mankind periſh, than the regula-"tive virtue of tradition miſcarry; nay, ſooner may "the ſinews of entire nature, by overſtraining, crack,

"and

" and ſhe loſe all her activity and motion, that is, " herſelf, than one ſingle part of that innumerable mul- " titude which integrate the vaſt teſtification which we " call tradition, can poſſibly be violated;" when after he hath told us, *p.* 116. that " the city of Rome was " bleſſed with more vigorous cauſes to imprint Chriſt's " doctrine at firſt, and recommend it to the next age, " than were found any where elſe; and conſequently, " that the ſtream of tradition, in its ſource and firſt " putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous " there than in any other ſee; and that the chief paſtor " of that ſee hath a particular title to infallibility built " upon tradition, above any other paſtor whatſoever: " not to dilate on the particular aſſiſtances to that Bi- " ſhop, ſpringing out of his divinely conſtituted office:" wnen, I ſay, after all this quaint reaſoning and rum- bling rhetorick, about the infallibility of oral tradition, and the particular infallibility of the Biſhop of Rome, built on tradition, we cannot but remember, that this great oracle of oral tradition the Pope, and this great maſter of it Mr. White, who is ſo peculiarly ſkilled in the rule of faith, have ſo manifeſtly declared themſelves to differ in points of faith. For that the Pope, and his congregation general at Rome, have condemned all his books, for this reaſon, becauſe " they contain ſeveral " propoſitions manifeſtly heretical," (*Mr. Wh. exetaſis, p.* 9.), is a ſign, that theſe two great wits do not very well hit it in matters of faith; and either that they do not both agree in the ſame rule of faith, or that one of them does not rightly underſtand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjuſtly ſays con- cerning the uſe of ſcripture, *p.* 39. be upon this account juſtly applied to the buſineſs of oral tradition? " If " we ſee two ſuch eminent wits among the Papiſts, " (the Pope and Mr. White), making uſe of the ſelf- " ſame, and, as they conceive, the beſt advantages " their rule of faith gives them, and availing themſelves " the beſt they can, by acquired ſkill, yet differ about " matters of faith; what certainty can we undertakingly " promiſe to weaker heads, that is, to the generality of " the Papiſts," in whom the governors of the church

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do profeſſedly cheriſh ignorance for the increaſing of their devotion?

§ 6. 4*thly*, We have ſufficient aſſurance that the books of ſcripture are conveyed down to us without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this, muſt either reject the authority of all books, becauſe we cannot be certain whether they be the ſame now that they were at firſt: or elſe give ſome probable reaſon why theſe ſhould be more liable to corruption than others. But any man that conſiders things, will eaſily find, that it is much more improbable that theſe books ſhould have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted in any thing material to faith or a good life, than any other books in the world, whether we conſider the peculiar providence of God engaged for the preſervation of them, or the peculiar circumſtances of theſe books. If they were written by men divinely inſpired, and are of uſe to Chriſtians, as is acknowledged, at leaſt in words, on all hands; nothing is more credible, than that the ſame divine providence which took care for the publiſhing of them, would likewiſe be concerned to preſerve them entire. And if we conſider the peculiar circumſtances of theſe books, we ſhall find it morally impoſſible that they ſhould have been materially corrupted; becauſe, being of univerſal and mighty concernment, and at firſt diffuſed into many hands, and ſoon after tranſlated into moſt languages, and moſt paſſages in them cited in books now extant, and all theſe now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great aſſurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not ſuffered any material alteration; and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition; as I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer the thing which he calls demonſtration.

§ 7. 5*thly*, That *de facto* the ſcripture hath been acknowledged by all Chriſtians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Chriſt hath, with greateſt certainty, been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adverſaries of Chriſtian religion did always look upon the ſcripture as the ſtandard and meaſure of the Chriſtian doctrine; and, in all their writing againſt Chriſtianity, took that for granted to be

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the Chriſtian faith which was contained in thoſe books; there having not as yet any philoſopher riſen up, who had demonſtrated to the world, that a doctrine could not, with ſufficient certainty and clearneſs, be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how abſurd had this method of confuting Chriſtian religion been, if it had been then the publick profeſſion of Chriſtians, that the ſcriptures were not the rule of their faith? How eaſy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for and defended Chriſtian religion, to have told them, they took a wrong meaſure of their doctrine? for it was not the principle of Chriſtians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the ſcriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way: but if they would effectually argue againſt it, they ought to inquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to ſon, without which the ſcriptures could ſignify no more to them than an unknown cypher without a key; being of themſelves, without the light of oral tradition, only a heap of unintelligible words, "unſenſed characters," and "ink variouſly figured in a book;" and therefore it was a groſs miſtake in them to think they could underſtand the Chriſtian religion, like their own philoſophy, by reading of thoſe books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay, they ought in all reaſon to have taken this courſe, and to have appealed from thoſe dead ſenſeleſs books, to the "true rule of faith, the living "voice of the church eſſential." But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpoſe in the apologies of the fathers? If he hath diſcovered any ſuch matter, he might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiſer. In the mean time, I ſhall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except againſt that method, but appeal frequently from the ſlanderous reports and miſrepreſentations which were made of their doctrine, to the books of ſcripture, as the true ſtandard of it.

§ 8. Another evidence that Chriſtians, in all ages ſince the Apoſtles times, have owned the ſcriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did uſe conſtantly to declare to the people what they were to believe, and what they were to practiſe, out of

of the ſcriptures; which had been moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs, had they believed, not the ſcriptures, but ſomething elſe, to have been the rule of faith and manners. For what could tend more to the ſeducing of the people from Mr. S.'s ſuppoſed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the doctrines of the Chriſtian faith from the ſcriptures? Had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S.'s way, they would not have built their doctrine upon ſcripture, perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occaſion to grow familiar with ſo dangerous a book; but rather, as their more prudent poſterity have done, would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have ſet open the ſtores of good wholſome traditions; and, inſtead of telling them, as they do moſt frequently, "Thus ſaith the ſcripture," would only have told them, "This is the voice of the "eſſential church; thus it hath been delivered down by "hand to us from our forefathers."

§ 9. I might add for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and perſecutors of Chriſtianity againſt this book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of Chriſtians, and deſtroy it out of the world, that by this means they might extirpate Chriſtianity: for it ſeems they thought that the aboliſhing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But, according to Mr. S.'s opinion, their malice wanted wit: for, had all the Bibles in the world been burnt, Chriſtian religion would nevertheleſs have been entirely preſerved, and ſafely tranſmitted down to us by ſenſe written in mens hearts, with the good help of Mr. S.'s demonſtrations. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it: for this occaſion and parent of all hereſy, the ſcripture, being once out of the way, ſhe might have had all in her own hands; and, by leading the people in the ſafe paths of tradition, and conſequently of ſcience, might have made them wiſe enough to obey. Well; but ſuppoſe the perſecutors of Chriſtianity miſtook themſelves in their deſign, how came the Chriſtians in thoſe days to be ſo tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themſelves to torments and death? And why did they look upon thoſe

who out of fear delivered up their books, as apoſtates, and renouncers of Chriſtianity? And if they had not thought this book to be the great inſtrument of their faith and ſalvation; and if it had really been of no greater conſideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it, why ſhould they be ſo loth to part with a few "unſen-"ſed characters, waxen-natured words, to be played "upon diverſely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blun-"der and confound, but to clear little or nothing?" why ſhould they value their lives at ſo cheap a rate, as to throw them away for a few inſignificant ſcrawls, and to ſhed their blood for "a little ink variouſly figured in "a book?" Did they not know, that the ſafety of Chriſtianity did not depend upon this book? Did no Chriſtian then underſtand that which, according to Mr. S. no Chriſtian can be ignorant of, *viz.* that not the ſcripture, but unmiſtakeable and indefectible oral tradition was the rule of faith? Why did they not conſider, that though this letter-rule of hereticks had been conſumed to aſhes; yet their faith would have lain ſafe, and "been preſerved "entire in its ſpiritual cauſes, mens minds, the nobleſt "pieces in nature?" *p.* 34. Some of them indeed did deliver up their books, and were called *traditores*; and I have ſome ground to believe, that theſe were the only traditionary Chriſtians of that time, and that the reſt were confeſſors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if this be not evidence enough, that the ſcriptures have always been acknowledged by Chriſtians for the rule of faith, I ſhall, when I come to examine his teſtimonies for tradition, (with the good leave of his diſtinction between *ſpeculators* and *teſtifiers*), prove, by moſt expreſs teſtimony, that it was the general opinion of the fathers, that "the "ſcriptures are the rule of Chriſtian faith;" and then, if his demonſtration of the infallibility of tradition will inforce, that as teſtifiers they muſt needs have ſpoken otherwiſe, who can help it?

SECT. IV. *How much Proteſtants allow to oral tradition.*

§ 1. HAving thus laid down the Proteſtant rule of faith, with the grounds of it, all that now remains

remains for me to do towards the clear and full ſtating of the controverſy between us, is, to take notice briefly, and with due limitations,

1. How much the Proteſtants do allow to oral tradition.

2. What thoſe things are, which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his rule of faith, which we ſee no cauſe to attribute to ours: and when this is done, any one may eaſily diſcern how far we differ.

§ 2. *Firſt,* How much Proteſtants do allow to oral tradition.

1*ſt*, We grant that oral tradition, in ſome circumſtances, may be a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but withal we deny, that ſuch circumſtances are now in being. In the firſt ages of the world, when the *credenda* or articles of religion, and the *agenda* or precepts of it, were but few, and ſuch as had the evidence of natural light; when the world was contracted into a few families in compariſon, and the age of man ordinarily extended to ſix or ſeven hundred years; it is eaſy to imagine how ſuch a doctrine, in ſuch circumſtances, might have been propagated by oral tradition, without any great change or alterations. Adam lived till Methuſelah was above two hundred years old, Methuſelah lived till Sem was near an hundred, and Sem outlived Abraham: ſo that this tradition need not paſs through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was ſufficient to have preſerved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themſelves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for through the corruption and negligence of men after the flood, (if not before), when the world began to multiply, and the age of man was ſhortened, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was generally loſt in the world. And ſo far as appears by ſcripture-hiſtory, the only record we have of thoſe times, when God called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapſed into polytheiſm and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater ſecurity of religion afterwards, when the poſterity of Abraham was multiplied into a great nation, the wiſdom of God did not think fit to intruſt the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of traditi-

on, but committed it to writing. Now, that God pitched upon this way, after the world had sadly experienced the unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good evidence, that this was the better and more secure way; it being the usual method of the divine dispensations, not go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the Apostle's reasoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion: *If the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second*, Heb. viii. 7.

§ 3. So likewise, when Christ revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his lifetime committed to writing; because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the Apostles, who were to publish this doctrine to the world, were assisted by an infallible spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end, the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of Protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom; who tells us, (*homil.* 1. *in Matth.*), "that Christ left "nothing in writing to his Apostles; but, instead "thereof, did promise to bestow upon them the grace "of his Holy Spirit, saying, John xiv. *He shall bring* "*all things to your remembrance*, &c. But because in "progress of time there were many grievous miscarri-"ages, both in matter of opinion, and also of life and "manners; therefore it was requisite, that the memo-"ry of this doctrine should be preserved by writing." So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§ 4. And

§ 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument againſt the way of tradition by writing, which he lays ſo much weight upon, *p.* 40. "That the Apoſtles and "their ſucceſſors went not with books in their hands, "to preach and deliver Chriſt's doctrine, but words in "their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned "their faith by another method a long time before many "of thoſe books were univerſally ſpread among the vul-"gar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilſt thoſe living oracles, the Apoſtles, were preſent with the church? doth it therefore follow, that there was no need of it afterwards, when the Apoſtles were dead, and that extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance was ceaſed? If the preachers now-a-days could give us any ſuch aſſurance, and confirm all they preach by ſuch frequent, and publick, and unqueſtionable miracles as the Apoſtles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they deliver to us. But ſeeing this is not the caſe, that ought in all reaſon to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of Chriſt with the greateſt certainty; and this I ſhall prove the ſcriptures to have done.

§ 5. So that, in thoſe circumſtances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine: but now, conſidering the great increaſe of mankind, and the ſhortneſs of man's life in theſe latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the Apoſtles age down to us, and the innumerable accidents, whereby, in the ſpace of fifteen hundred years, oral tradition might receive inſenſible alterations, ſo as at laſt to become quite another thing from what it was at firſt, by paſſing through many hands; in which paſſage, all the miſtakes and corruptions which, in the ſeveral ages through which it was tranſmitted, did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulneſs, or out of intereſt and deſign, are neceſſarily derived into the laſt: ſo that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; becauſe, as it paſſeth along, more errors and corruptions are infuſed into it: I ſay, conſidering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of Chriſtian religion could, with any probable ſecurity and certainty, have

been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God, foreseeing this, did in his wisdom so order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible spirit in the delivery of this doctrine, should, before they left the world, commit it to writing: which was accordingly done; and by this instrument, the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§ 6. 2*dly*, We allow, that tradition, oral and written, do give us sufficient assurance, that the books of scripture, which we now have, are the very books which were written by the Apostles and Evangelists; nay farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case: but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general assurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontrolled tradition of this, transmitted from one age to another, partly orally, and partly by the testimony of other books. Thus much is common to scripture with other books. But then the scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books, that being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and studied, than any other books in the world whatsoever; and consequently, they have a more universal and better grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all ages by Christians, except three or four books of them, which for some time were questioned by some churches, but have since been generally received; but the greatest enemies of our religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very books which the Apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient book, without a particular and immediate revelation.

§ 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question, "What is the rule "of faith?" is, What is the next and immediate means whereby

whereby the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know, that theſe are the books of ſcripture; yet theſe books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know, what is Chriſt's doctrine, and conſequently what we are to believe.

§ 8. Nor doth this conceſſion make oral tradition to be the rule of faith by a parity of reaſon; as if, becauſe we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty tranſmit a book to after ages, we muſt therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine conſiſting of ſeveral articles of faith, (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges, *Ruſbw. dial.* 4. § 9.), and many laws and precepts of life: ſo becauſe oral tradition ſufficiently aſſures us, that this is *magna charta*, and that the ſtatute-book, in which are contained thoſe laws which it concerns every man to be ſkilful in; therefore, by like parity of reaſon, it muſt follow, that tradition itſelf is better than a book, even the beſt way imaginable, to convey down ſuch laws to us. Mr. S. ſaith expreſsly it is, *p.* 23.; but how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wiſdom of all lawgivers, who ſeem to think otherwiſe. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down from hand to hand of the ſenſe and "faith of forefathers," *i. e.* of the goſpel or meſſage of Chriſt. Now, ſuppoſe any oral meſſage, conſiſting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred ſeveral perſons of different degrees of underſtanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and ſo onwards to a hundred deſcents; is it probable, this meſſage, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through ſo many mouths, as if it were written down in ſo many letters, concerning which every bearer ſhould need to ſay no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whoſe name was ſubſcribed to it? I think it not probable, though the mens lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter: for the letter is a meſſage which no man can miſtake in, unleſs he will; but the errand ſo difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager againſt every one of the meſ-

ſengers,

ſengers, that he either forgets or miſtakes ſomething in it; it is ten thouſand to one, that the firſt hundred do not all agree in it; it is a million to one, that the next ſucceſſion do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the firſt hundred miſtook or forgot any thing, it is then impoſſible that he that received it from him ſhould deliver it right; and ſo the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet, after all this, I do not ſay but it may be demonſtrated, in Mr. S.'s way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§ 9. *3dly*, We allow, that the doctrine of Chriſtian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the paſtors of the church, and taught by Chriſtian parents to their children: but with great difference; by ſome more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with leſs care and exactneſs, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in paſtors or parents; and likewiſe with very different ſucceſs, accordi..g to the different capacities and diſpoſitions of the learners. We allow likewiſe, that there hath been a conſtant courſe of viſible actions, conformable, in ſome meaſure, to the principles of Chriſtianity; but then we ſay, that thoſe outward acts and circumſtances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by addition to them, and defalcation from them in ſeveral ages. That this not only is poſſible, but hath actually happened, I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer his demonſtrations. Now, that ſeveral of the main doctrines of faith contained in the ſcripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practiſed by Chriſtians in all ages, (as the articles ſummed up in the Apoſtles creed, the uſe of the two ſacraments), is a good evidence ſo far, that the ſcriptures contain the doctrine of Chriſtian religion. But then, if we conſider how we come to know that ſuch points of faith have been taught, and ſuch external actions practiſed in all ages, it is not enough to ſay, there is a preſent multitude of Chriſtians that profeſs to have received ſuch doctrines as ever believed and practiſed, and from hence to infer that they were ſo; the inconſequence of which argument I ſhall have a better occaſion to ſhew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's ſatisfaction, muſt make it evident

evident from the beſt monuments and records of ſeveral ages, that is, from the moſt authentick books of thoſe times, that ſuch doctrines have in all thoſe ages been conſtantly and univerſally taught and practiſed. But then, if, from thoſe records of former times, it appear, that other doctrines, not contained in the ſcriptures, were not taught and practiſed univerſally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, ſome in one age, and ſome in another, according as ignorance and ſuperſtition in the people, ambition and intereſt in the chief paſtors of the church, have miniſtered occaſion and opportunity; and that the innovators of theſe doctrines and practices have all along pretended to confirm them out of ſcripture, as the acknowledged rule of faith; and have likewiſe acknowledged the books of ſcripture to have deſcended without any material corruption or alteration, (all which will ſufficiently appear in the proceſs of my diſcourſe); then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the preſent church concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practiſed, which hath no real foundation in ſcripture, be any argument againſt theſe books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Chriſtian doctrine. And to ſay the ſcripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reaſonable, than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law by the preſent practice of it; which every one that compares things fairly together, muſt acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

SECT. V. *How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than Proteſtants to theirs.*

§ 1. *Secondly,* HOW much more he attributes to his rule of faith than we think fit to attribute to ours.

1*ſt*, We do not ſay, that it is impoſſible in the nature of the thing that this rule ſhould fail; that is, either that theſe books ſhould ceaſe to deſcend, or ſhould be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, becauſe there is no need we ſhould. We believe the providence of God will take care of them, and ſecure them from being either loſt or materially corrupted; yet we think it very

very poſſible, that all the books in the world may be burnt, or otherwiſe deſtroyed. All that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly ſufficient, if men be not wanting to themſelves, to convey the Chriſtian doctrine to all ſucceſſive ages; and we think him very unreaſonable that expects that God ſhould do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of Chriſtian religion in the world.

§ 2. 2*dly*, Nor do we ſay, that that certainty and aſſurance which we have that theſe books are the ſame that were written by the Apoſtles, is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle; but only that it is a truth capable of evidence ſufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he pleaſe, ſay, that tradition's certainty is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle; but then he that ſays this, ſhould take heed how he takes upon him to demonſtrate it. Ariſtotle was ſo wiſe, as never to demonſtrate firſt principles; for which he gives this very good reaſon, becauſe they cannot be demonſtrated. And moſt prudent men are of opinion, that a ſelf-evident principle of all things in the world ſhould not be demonſtrated, becauſe it needs not: for to what purpoſe ſhould a man write a book to prove that which every man muſt aſſent to without any proof, ſo ſoon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a ſelf-evident principle to be ſuch a propoſition, as having in itſelf ſufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing elſe. If I be herein miſtaken, I deſire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§ 3. So that the true ſtate of the controverſy between us, is, Whether oral and practical tradition, in oppoſition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Chriſt can with certainty and ſecurity be conveyed down to us, who live at this diſtance from the age of Chriſt and his Apoſtles? This he affirms; and the Proteſtants deny, not only that it is the ſole means, but that it is ſufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of holy ſcripture, as the proper meaſure and ſtandard of our religion: but, then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge

knowledge of these books; nor do they exclude the authentick records of former ages, nor the constant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being subordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, so far are they from excluding these concurrent means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred oracles, the holy scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which Christ delivered to his Apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: Suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logick which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand, by consulting those of the present age who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his *Organon*, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion, that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious sense of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of disputing which is used by the professed Aristotelians of the present age, and with all that scholastick jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him so great a man in the science of controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate first and self-evident

evident principles: A trick not to be learned out of Ariſtotle's *Organon*. The application is ſo eaſy, that I need not make it.

PART II.

Concerning the properties of the rule of faith; and whether they agree ſolely to oral tradition.

SECT. I.

§ 1. HAving thus endeavoured to bring the controverſy between us to its clear and true ſtate, that ſo we might not quarrel in the dark, and diſpute about we know not what, I come now to grapple more cloſely with his book. And the main foundations of his diſcourſe may be reduced to theſe three heads.

1. That the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the doctrine of Chriſt, belong ſolely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his five firſt diſcourſes.

2. That it is impoſſible that this way of oral tradition ſhould fail. And this he pretends to prove in his four laſt diſcourſes.

3. That oral tradition hath been generally reputed by Chriſtians in all ages the ſole way and means of conveying down to them the doctrine of Chriſt. And this he attempts to ſhew in his laſt chapter, which he calls, *The conſent of authority to the ſubſtance of his foregoing diſcourſes*. If he make good theſe three things, he hath acquitted himſelf well in his undertaking: but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§ 2. Firſt, Whether the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine, belong ſolely to oral tradition?

The true way to meaſure the eſſential properties of this or that means, is, by conſidering its ſufficiency for its end: for whatſoever is neceſſary to make any means ſufficient

ſufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an eſſential property of that means, and nothing elſe. Now, becauſe the end we are ſpeaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine to all thoſe who are concerned to know it, in ſuch a manner as they may be ſufficiently certain and ſecure, that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was firſt delivered; from hence it appears, that the means to this end muſt have theſe two properties: 1. It muſt be ſufficiently plain and intelligible; 2. It muſt be ſufficiently certain to us; that is, ſuch as we may be fully ſatisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have theſe two conditions, it is ſufficient for its end: but if it want either of them, it muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be aſſured, that that doctrine which it brings down to us for the doctrine of Chriſt, is really ſuch.

§ 3. I know he aſſigns more properties of this means, which he calls *the rule of faith;* but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with theſe two, or do not at all belong to it. As,

1*ſt*, That "it muſt be plain and ſelf-evident to all, "as to its exiſtence," *p.* 11. Nothing can be more frivolous than to make this a property of any thing; becauſe whoſoever inquires into the properties of a thing, is ſuppoſed to be already ſatisfied that the thing is.

2*dly*, That it be "evidenceable as to its ruling "power," *p.* 11.; that is, as he explains himſelf, "that "men be capable of knowing that it deſerves to be re-"lied on as a rule," *p.* 3. By which he muſt either underſtand the certainty of it; and then it falls in with the ſecond property I mentioned, and is the ſame with the ſixth which he lays down: or elſe he means more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule; for I underſtand not how a man can know, that any thing deſerves to be relied on as a rule, otherwiſe than by knowing it hath the properties of a rule, that is, that it is ſufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the e-

vidence of a thing, as to its exiſtence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is ſuch a thing, be another.

§ 4. 3*dly*, That it be "apt to ſettle and juſtify un- "doubting perſons," *p.* 12. What he means here by *ſettling undoubting perſons*, I am not able, on the ſudden, to comprehend; becauſe I underſtand not what unſettles a man beſides doubting: for if a man be but ſo well ſatisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not eaſily apprehend how he can be ſettled better; that is, how his mind can be more at reſt than not to doubt. But if by *undoubting perſons* he means thoſe who do not doubt for the preſent, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by *apt to ſettle undoubting perſons, viz.* apt to ſettle perſons when they do doubt, that is, when they are not undoubting perſons. As for *juſtifying undoubting perſons*, if he means, that whoſoever ſecurely relies on this rule, ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in ſo doing; this is plainly conſequent upon the two properties I have laid down: for if the means of conveying Chriſt's doctrine be ſufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is juſtified in ſo doing, becauſe he truſts a means which is ſufficient for its end.

§ 5. 4*thly*, That it be "apt to ſatisfy fully the moſt "ſceptical diſſenters and rational doubters," *p.* 12. For its aptitude to ſatisfy rational doubters, that plainly follows from the ſufficient certainty of it; but why it ſhould be a neceſſary property of a rule of faith, to be apt to ſatisfy the moſt ſceptical diſſenter, I can no more divine, than I can why he ſhould call a diſſenter ſceptical, which are repugnant terms: for a ſceptick is one who neither aſſents to any thing, nor diſſents; but is in a perpetual ſuſpenſe, becauſe he looks upon every opinion as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the ſcales either way. But if by *the moſt ſceptical diſſenter* he means only a ſceptick, one that doth not believe the doctrine of Chriſt, nor any thing elſe, then I would fain know what that is which in reaſon is apt fully to ſatisfy ſuch a perſon. If any thing will, ſure a demonſtration will: but there is no aptitude at all in a demonſtration, to ſatisfy him who

who doubts, whether there be any ſuch thing as a demonſtration, and likewiſe queſtions the certainty of all thoſe principles from whence any concluſion can be demonſtrated. And thoſe who are moſt ſceptical, profeſs to doubt of all this.

§ 6. *5thly*, That it be "apt to convince the moſt "obſtinate and acute adverſary," *p.* 11. 12. If the rule be plain and certain, the moſt acute adverſary may be convinced by it if he will; that is, if he be not obſtinate: but if he be obſtinate, that is, ſuch a one as will not be convinced, but will perſiſt in his error, in deſpite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I muſt profeſs, that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man who will not be convinced by any reaſon that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any rule of faith, though never ſo ſelf-evident, he might have learned from the ſame author, in whom he may find his chief properties of the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to have conſidered his explication of them: I mean, Dr. Holden; who lays down the ſecond property of the rule of faith, or, as he calls it, "the means whereby we come to the "knowledge of revealed truth," in theſe words, (*Analyſ. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 3.): "Another (*viz.* condition of this "means, *&c.*) is, That it be apt of its own nature to "afford the greateſt, true, and rational certainty, to "all men, without exception, to whom the knowledge "of it ſhall come; provided they be furniſhed with the "faculty of reaſon, and have their minds purified from "all paſſion and luſt, which do (as he tells us, *cap.* 6.) "often hinder the moſt ſagacious perſons from under-"ſtanding the moſt evident and manifeſt truth." Now, I ſuppoſe obſtinacy to be the effect of paſſion and luſt.

If Mr. S. mean, that the rule of faith muſt be apt to conquer obſtinacy, and make men lay it aſide, I cannot underſtand this neither; unleſs he mean, that the rule of faith muſt be a cudgel, which the traditionary church have been good at, and may uſe it again when occaſion ſerves: for none but they have a title to it upon a church-account; as Mr. S. tells us, *corol.* 10. But, ſetting aſide this, I do not know any thing elſe that is apt to conquer obſtinacy: not the cleareſt reaſon, or the

ſtrongeſt demonſtration; for that, I am ſure, is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreaſonable humour with any probability of ſucceſs. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may eaſily be convinced, by experience, how unapt obſtinate perſons are to be convinced by reaſon. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of Chriſt, preached by himſelf and his Apoſtles to the obſtinate Jews, and confirmed by multitudes of unqueſtionable miracles; and yet we do not find, by the ſucceſs of it, that it was ſo very apt to convince thoſe that were obſtinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwiſe than by the uſual and frequent ſucceſs of it when it is applied. Nor do I think, that the doctrine of the goſpel was ever intended for that purpoſe. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverſe; but he hath done that which is ſufficient for the ſatisfying and winning over of thoſe who are teachable, and willing to learn. And ſuch a diſpoſition ſuppoſeth a man to have laid aſide both ſcepticiſm and obſtinacy.

§ 7. *6thly*, That it be "certain in itſelf," *p.* 12.

7thly, That it be "abſolutely aſcertainable to us, *p.* 12.

Theſe two are comprehended in the ſecond property I laid down; ſo that I have nothing to ſay againſt them, but that the laſt looks very like a contradiction, "abſolutely aſcertainable to us;" which is to ſay, "with "reſpect to us, without reſpect to us;" for *abſolutely* ſeems to exclude *reſpect*, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus ſhewn, that the ſeven properties he mentions are either coincident with thoſe two I have laid down, or conſequent upon them, or abſurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are thoſe two which I firſt named, and no more.

SECT. II. *That the properties of a rule of faith belong to ſcripture.*

§ 1. LEt us now ſee how he endeavours to ſhew, that theſe properties agree ſolely to oral tradition. He tells us, there are but two pretenders to this title of being

being the rule of faith, ſcripture, and oral tradition: theſe properties do not belong to ſcripture, and they do to oral tradition; therefore ſolely to it. A very good argument, if he can prove theſe two things: "That "theſe two properties do not belong to ſcripture, and "that they do to oral tradition."

§ 2. In order to the proving of the firſt, that theſe properties do not belong to ſcripture, he premiſeth this note, *p.* 13. "That we cannot by the ſcriptures mean "the ſenſe of them; but the book, that is, ſuch or ſuch "characters not yet ſenſed or interpreted." But why can we not by the ſcriptures mean the ſenſe of them? He gives this clear and admirable reaſon, Becauſe the ſenſe of the ſcripture is "the things to be known; and theſe we "confeſs are the very points of faith of which the rule "of faith is to aſcertain us." Which is juſt as if a man ſhould reaſon thus: Thoſe who ſay the ſtatute-book can convey to them the knowledge of the ſtatute-law, cannot by the ſtatute-book mean the ſenſe of it, but the book; that is, ſuch or ſuch characters not yet ſenſed or interpreted; becauſe the ſenſe of the ſtatute-book is the thing to be known, and theſe are the very laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this book. Which is to ſay, that a book cannot convey to a man the knowledge of any matter; becauſe, if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But that he may farther ſee what excellent reaſoning this is, I ſhall apply this paragraph to oral tradition; for the argument holds every whit as well concerning that: "To "ſpeak to them in their own language, who ſay that "oral tradition is the rule, we muſt premiſe this note, "that they cannot mean by oral tradition the ſenſe of "it, that is, the things to be known; for thoſe they "confeſs are the very points of faith of which the rule of "faith is to aſcertain us. When they ſay then, that o-"ral tradition is the rule of faith, they can only mean "by oral tradition the words wherein it is delivered, "not yet ſenſed or interpreted, but as yet to be ſenſed; "that is, ſuch or ſuch ſounds, with their aptneſs to ſigni-"fy to them aſſuredly God's mind, or aſcertain them of "their faith: for, abſtracting from the ſenſe and actual "ſignification of thoſe words, there is nothing imagi-

" nable left, but thoſe ſounds, with their aptneſs to ſi-
" gnify it." When he hath anſwered this argument, he will have anſwered his own. In the mean while, this diſcourſe, that he who holds the ſcriptures to be the rule of faith, muſt needs by the ſcriptures mean a book void of ſenſe, *&c.*; becauſe otherwiſe, if by ſcripture he ſhould underſtand a book that hath a certain ſenſe in it, that ſenſe muſt be the doctrine of Chriſt, which is the very thing that this book is to convey to us: I ſay, this diſcourſe tends only to prove it an abſurd thing, for any man that holds ſcripture the means of conveying Chriſt's doctrine, to underſtand by the ſcripture a book that conveys Chriſt's doctrine. This being his own reaſon, put into plain Engliſh, I leave the reader to judge whether it be not ſomething ſhort of perfect ſcience and demonſtration. Nay, if it were thoroughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall ſhort of that low pitch of ſcience which he ſpeaks of in his preface; where he tells us, that " the way of ſcience is to proceed from one piece " of ſenſe to another."

§ 3. Having premiſed this, that by the ſcriptures we muſt only mean dead characters that have no ſenſe under them, he proceeds to ſhew, that theſe dead characters have not the properties of a rule of faith belonging to them. Which, although it be nothing to the purpoſe when he hath ſhewn it; yet it is very pleaſant to obſerve by what croſs and untoward arguments he goes about it: of which I will give the reader a taſte, by one or two inſtances.

In the firſt place, he ſhews, that it cannot be evident to us, that " theſe books were written by men divinely " inſpired; becauſe, till the ſeeming contradictions in " thoſe books are ſolved, which to do, is one of the moſt " difficult taſks in the world, they cannot be concluded " to be of God's inditing," *p.* 14. Now, how is this an argument againſt thoſe who by the ſcriptures muſt mean unſenſed letters and characters? I had always thought contradictions had been in the ſenſe of words, not in the letters and characters; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters do contradict one another.

The other inſtance ſhall be in his laſt argument; which

which is this, *p.* 17. That " the ſcripture cannot be the " rule o faith, becauſe thoſe who are to be ruled and " guided by the ſcripture's letter to faith, cannot be cer- " tain of the true ſenſe of it:" which is to ſay, that unſenſed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, becauſe the rule of faith muſt have a certain ſenſe; that is, muſt not be unſenſed letters and characters: which in plain Engliſh amounts to thus much, unſenſed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, that they cannot.

§ 4. And thus I might trace him through all his properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader ſee how incomparably he demonſtrates the falſhood of this Proteſtant tenet, as he calls it, that a ſenſeleſs book may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of purſuing him in theſe airy and phantaſtical combats; and ſhall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and to batter down the caſtles which himſelf hath built. Only I think fit to acquaint him, once for all, with a great ſecret of the Proteſtant doctrine, which it ſeems he hath hitherto been ignorant of, (for I am ſtill more confirmed in my opinion, that he forſook our religion before he underſtood it), that when they ſay the ſcriptures are the rule of faith, or the means whereby Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the ſcriptures, books written in ſuch words as do ſufficiently expreſs the ſenſe and meaning of Chriſt's doctrine.

§ 5. And to ſatisfy him that we are not abſurd and unreaſonable in ſuppoſing the ſcriptures to be ſuch a book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me theſe four things, or ſhew reaſon to the contrary.

1. That whatever can be ſpoken in plain and intelligible words, and ſuch as have a certain ſenſe, may be written in the ſame words.

2. That the ſame words are as intelligible when they are written, as when they are ſpoken.

3. That God, if he pleaſe, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

4. That we have no reaſon to think that God affects obſcurity, and envies that men ſhould underſtand him, in thoſe things which are neceſſary for them to know; and which muſt have been written to no purpoſe, if we

we cannot underſtand them. St. Luke tells Theophilus, chap. i. 3. 4. that he wrote the hiſtory of Chriſt to him, on purpoſe to give him *a certain knowledge* of thoſe things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain ſenſe, ſhould give a man certain knowledge of things, is beyond my capacity. St. John ſaith, chap. xx. 31. that he purpoſely committed ſeveral of Chriſt's miracles to writing; *that men might believe on him.* But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have adviſed him to ſpare his labour; and would have given him this good reaſon for it, Becauſe, when he had written his book, no body would be able to find the certain ſenſe of it without oral tradition; and that alone would ſecurely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of Chriſt, and the certain knowledge of thoſe miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If theſe four things be but granted, I ſee not why, when we ſay that the ſcriptures are the means of conveying to us Chriſt's doctrine, we may not be allowed to underſtand by the ſcriptures, a book which doth in plain and intelligible words expreſs to us this doctrine.

SECT. III. *Mr. S.'s exceptions againſt ſcripture examined.*

§ 1. AND now, although this might have been a ſufficient anſwer to his exceptions againſt the ſcriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; becauſe all of them ſuppoſe that which is apparently falſe and abſurd, as granted by Proteſtants, *viz.* that the ſcriptures are only a heap of dead letters and inſignificant characters, without any ſenſe under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and ſenſe: yet, becauſe ſeveral of his exceptions pretend to ſhew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the ſcriptures; therefore I ſhall give particular anſwers to them; and, as I go along, ſhew, that tradition is liable to all or moſt of thoſe exceptions, and to far greater than thoſe.

§ 2. Firſt, Whereas he ſays, *p.* 13. "It cannot be evident to Proteſtants from their principles, that the "books of ſcripture were originally written by men di-

"vinely

"vinely inſpired;" I will ſhew him, that it may, and then anſwer the reaſons of this exception.

It is evident, from an univerſal, conſtant, and uncontrolled tradition among Chriſtians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greateſt adverſaries of our religion, that theſe books were originally written by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts. And this is not only a Proteſtant principle, but the principle of all mankind, "That an undoubted tradition is ſufficient "evidence of the antiquity and author of a book," and all the extrinſical argument that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident, that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, that is, ſecured from error and miſtake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; becauſe it is unreaſonable to imagine, that the divine power ſhould ſo remarkably interpoſe for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give ſo eminent an atteſtation to the Apoſtles to convince the world, that they were immediately appointed and commiſſioned by God, and yet not ſecure them from error in the delivery of it. And that ſuch miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible hiſtories as we have for any of thoſe things which we do moſt firmly believe. And this is better evidence, that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, than bare oral tradition can furniſh us withal: for ſetting aſide the authentick relation of theſe matters in books, it is moſt probable, that oral tradition of itſelf, and without books, would ſcarce have preſerved the memory of any of thoſe particular miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles which are recorded in ſcripture. And for the probability of this, I offer theſe two things to his conſideration.

1. No man can deny, that memorable perſons have lived, and actions been done in the world innumerable, whereof no hiſtory now extant makes any mention.

2. He himſelf will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in ſcripture. And now I challenge him to ſhew the ſingle virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of any of thoſe perſons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, beſides thoſe which are mentioned in books; or to give

give a catalogue but of ten of thoſe innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangeliſts, with circumſtances as punctual and particular as thoſe are clothed withal. If he can do this, it will be a good evidence, that oral tradition ſingly, and by itſelf, can do ſomething: but if he cannot, it is as plain an evidence, on the contrary, that if thoſe actions of former times, and thoſe miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but intruſted ſolely to oral tradition, we ſhould have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of thoſe that were not written. —

§ 3. Now to examine his reaſons for this exception:

1*ſt*, He ſaith, *p.* 13. "It is moſt manifeſt, that this can-"not be made evident to the vulgar, that ſcripture was "written by men divinely inſpired." This reaſon is as eaſily anſwered, by ſaying, It is moſt manifeſt that it can. But beſides ſaying ſo, I have ſhewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do moſt moſt firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudeſt of the vulgar, and thoſe who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds, that there was ſuch a King as William the Conqueror: and the miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this.

2*dly*, He ſays, *p.* 13. 14. "This cannot be evident to "the curious and moſt ſpeculative ſearchers, but by ſo "deep an inſpection into the ſenſe of ſcripture, as ſhall "diſcover ſuch ſecrets that philoſophy and human indu-"ſtry could never have arrived to:" As if we could not be aſſured, that any thing were written by men divinely inſpired, unleſs it were above the reach of human underſtanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's doctrine, *Whatever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, that do ye likewiſe unto them*, becauſe every one can underſtand it. But if there were more myſteries in the ſcriptures than there are, I hope a man might be ſatisfied, that they were written by men divinely inſpired, without a clear comprehenſion of all thoſe myſteries. The evidence of the inſpiration of any perſon doth not depend upon the plainneſs or ſublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodneſs of the arguments which

which tend to perſuade us that the perſon is ſo inſpired; and the argument that is moſt fit to ſatisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now, I would gladly know, why a learned man cannot be aſſured of a miracle, that is, a plain ſenſible matter of fact done long ago, but "by ſo "deep an inſpection into the ſenſe of ſcripture, as ſhall "diſcover ſuch ſecrets that philoſophy and human indu-"ſtry could never have arrived to."

§ 4. *3dly*, Becauſe "all the ſeeming contradictions "of ſcripture muſt be ſolved, before we can out of the "bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's in-"diting. To ſolve which literally, plainly and ſatiſ-"factorily, (he tells us), the memory of ſo many par-"ticulars, which made them clearer to thoſe of the "age in which they were written, and the matter "known, muſt needs be ſo worn out by track of time, "that it is one of the moſt difficult taſks in the world, "*p.* 14." As if we could not believe a book to be of God's inditing, becauſe there ſeem now to be ſome contradictions in it, which we have reaſon to believe could eaſily have been ſolved by thoſe who lived in the age in which it was written: or as if oral tradition could help a man to ſolve theſe contradictions, when the memory of particulars neceſſary for the clear ſolution of them, is (as himſelf confeſſes) worn out by track of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the ſolution of the ſeeming contradictions of ſcripture, demonſtrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preſerved the memory of thoſe particulars neceſſary for that purpoſe, the memory of which muſt needs be long ſince worn out by track of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument againſt our rule, which is as ſtrong againſt his own? This is juſt like Captain Everard's friend's way of arguing againſt the Proteſtants, That they cannot rely upon ſcripture, becauſe it is full of plain contradictions, impoſſible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reaſon to ſubmit to the infallibility of the church. And, for an inſtance of ſuch a contradiction, he pitched upon the three fourteen generations, mentioned in the firſt of St. Matthew; becauſe the

the third ſeries of generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now how this difficulty hath been ſufficiently ſatisfied, both by Proteſtant and Popiſh commentators, without any recourſe to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is, the unreaſonableneſs of making this an exception againſt the Proteſtants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themſelves. Suppoſe this contradiction not capable of any ſolution by Proteſtants, (as he affirms), and I ſhould ſubmit to the infallibility of the church; can he aſſure me, that infallibility can make thirteen, fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer ſatisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the church? The caſe is the very ſame as to Mr. S.'s exception. If I owned oral tradition, I ſhould be never the nearer ſolving the ſeeming contradictions of ſcripture; and conſequently I could not in reaſon conclude it to be of God's inditing. So that, in truth, theſe exceptions, if they were true, would not ſtrike at Proteſtancy, but at Chriſtian religion; which is the general unhappineſs of moſt of the Popiſh arguments: than which there is no greater evidence, that the church of Rome is not the true mother; becauſe ſhe had rather Chriſtianity ſhould be deſtroyed, than it ſhould appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It was a work very proper for the heretick Marcion, to aſſault religion this way; who, as Tertullian tells us, (*l.* 1. *contr. Marcion.*), writ a whole book, which he called *Antitheſes;* wherein he reckoned up all the contradictions (as he thought) between the Old and New Teſtament: but methinks it is very improper for the Papiſts, who pretend to be the only true Chriſtians in the world, to ſtrain their wits, to diſcover as many contradictions as they can in the ſcripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them; the natural conſequence of which is, the expoſing of this ſacred inſtrument of our religion, and even Chriſtianity itſelf, to the ſcorn of Atheiſts. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and Captain Everard, I am heartily ſorry to ſee, that one of the chief fruits of their converſion is, to abuſe the Bible.

§ 5. Secondly, He ſays, *p.* 14. "That Proteſtants "cannot

" cannot know how many the books of ſcripture ought " to be; and which of the many controverted ones " may be ſecurely put in that catalogue, which not." This he proves, by ſaying, " It is moſt palpable, that " few, or at leaſt the rude vulgar, can never be aſſured " of it." And if this be a good argument, this again is a good anſwer, to ſay, It is not moſt palpable. But I ſhall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that juſt ſo many ought to be received as uncontroverted books, concerning which it cannot be ſhewn there was ever any controverſy; and ſo many as controverted, concerning which it appears that queſtion hath been made. And if thoſe which have been controverted, have been ſince received by thoſe churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, becauſe the controverſy about them is at an end. And now, I would fain know, what greater certainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue of the books of ſcripture. For it muſt either acknowledge ſome books have been controverted, or not. If not, why doth he make a ſuppoſition of controverted books? If oral tradition acknowledge ſome to have been controverted, then it cannot aſſure us that they have not been controverted, nor conſequently that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as ſuch, concerning which thoſe churches who did once raiſe a controverſy about them, have been ſince ſatisfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church now receives the epiſtle to the Hebrews as canonical: I aſk, do they receive it as ever delivered for ſuch? That they muſt, if they receive it from oral tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered: and yet St. Hierom, ſpeaking not as a ſpeculator, but a teſtifier, ſaith expreſsly of it, (*Com. in Eſai. c.* 6. 8.), " that the cuſtom of the Latin " church doth not receive it among the canonical ſcri- " ptures." What ſaith Mr. S. to this? It is clear from this teſtimony, that the Roman church, in St. Hierom's time, did not acknowledge this epiſtle for canonical; and it is as plain, that the preſent Roman church doth receive it for canonical. Where is then the infallibility of oral tradition? How does the living voice of

the preſent church aſſure us, that what books are now received by her, were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the matter muſt come to be tried by the beſt records of former ages, which the Proteſtants are willing to have their catalogue tried by, then it ſeems the Proteſtants have a better way to know what books are canonical, than is the infallible way of oral tradition; and ſo long as it is better, no matter though it be not called infallible.

§ 6. Thirdly, He ſays, *p.* 15. "The Proteſtants cannot know, that the very original, or a perfectly true "copy of theſe books, hath been preſerved." It is not neceſſary that they ſhould know either of theſe; it is ſufficient that they know that thoſe copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of faith or practice: and that they have ſufficient aſſurance of this, I have already ſhewn. And how doth he prove the contrary? By his uſual argument, with ſaying, "It is "manifeſtly impoſſible." But how do the church of Rome know, that they have perfectly true copies of the ſcriptures in the original languages? They do not pretend to know this. The learned men of that church acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know, otherwiſe than by probable conjecture, as we alſo may do, which of thoſe readings is the true one. And why ſhould it be more neceſſary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reaſonable to content themſelves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into thoſe books, ſo may we. And that there have not, we know by better arguments than oral tradition, even by the aſſurance we have of God's vigilant providence, and from a moral impoſſibility in the thing, that a book ſo univerſally diſperſed, and tranſlated into ſo many languages, and conſtantly read in the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, ſhould have been materially corrupted, ſo as that all thoſe copies and tranſlations ſhould have agreed in thoſe corruptions. And this reaſon St. Auſtin (*Ep.* 48.) gives of the preſervation of the ſcriptures entire, rather than any other book. If Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Auſtin to account for it.

§ 7. Fourthly, He ſays, *p.* 15. "The Proteſtants, at "leaſt

" leaſt the rudeſt vulgar, can have no aſſurance that " thoſe books are rightly tranſlated; becauſe they can- " not be aſſured either of the ability or integrity of tranſ- " lators."

Fifthly, "Nor can they (ſays he, *p.* 16. 17.) be aſſured, " that the tranſcribers, and printers, and correctors of " the preſs, have carefully and faithfully done their part " in tranſcribing and printing the ſeveral copies and " tranſlations of ſcripture aright; becauſe they only can " have evidence of the right letter of ſcripture, who " ſtood at their elbows attentively watching they ſhould " not err in making it perfectly like a former copy; and " even then, why might they not miſtruſt their own " eyes, and aptneſs to overſee?" I put theſe two exceptions together, becauſe the ſame anſwer will ſerve them both. The grounds of theſe exceptions, if they have any, are theſe: That no man is to be truſted either for his ſkill or honeſty; and, That it is dangerous for men to truſt their own eyes. Unleſs both theſe be true, theſe exceptions are of no force: for if we can be aſſured that other men have ſufficient ſkill in any thing which we ourſelves do not ſufficiently underſtand, we may be aſſured that thoſe who tranſlated the Bible had ſkill in the original languages; becauſe very credible perſons tell us ſo, and we have no reaſon to doubt their teſtimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that, if we can have ſufficient aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reaſon to doubt of the ſkill of tranſlators, tranſcribers, or printers: and if we can have no aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be aſſured there was ſuch a man as Henry VIII.; and yet, I hope, the church of Rome makes no doubt of it: nor can any man be aſſured there is ſuch a city as Rome, who hath not ſeen it; nay, if he have, "why may he not miſtruſt his own eyes? *p.* 16. And, which is the ſaddeſt inconvenience of all," if no body be to be truſted, nor mens own eyes, (and for the ſame reaſon, ſure not their ears), what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition, which neceſſarily ſuppoſeth a competent underſtanding, a faithful memory, an honeſt mind, in the generality of thoſe who delivered Chriſt's doctrine down to us? and by

what means ſoever a man can be aſſured of theſe, by the ſame he may much more eaſily be aſſured of the ability and integrity of tranſlators, tranſcribers, and printers. But, above all, it ſuppoſeth that mens ears and eyes cannot deceive them in thoſe things which they are taught, and ſee practiſed.

Is it not very pretty to ſee what pitiful ſhifts men that ſerve an hypotheſis are put to; when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities of ſcepticiſm; and, to defend the certainty of oral tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of mens ſenſes, and an aſſurance of the ability and integrity of thoſe who were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born), are glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary; ſuch as theſe, That we can have no aſſurance, but that whole profeſſions of men "might hap to be knaves," *p.* 16.; that we can have no ſufficient evidence that any man made his "copy perfectly like the former, unleſs we "ſtood at his elbow attentively watching him, *ibid.*:" nay, and if we did ſo, we have ſtill reaſon to diſtruſt our ſenſes? In ſhort, all human faith ſuppoſeth honeſty among men; and that, for matters of fact and plain objects of ſenſe, the general and uncontrolled teſtimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar ſkill and knowledge, that the generality of thoſe who are accounted ſkilful in that kind are to be relied upon: for, as Ariſtotle well obſerves, there is no greater ſign of an undiſciplined wit, (or, to uſe one of Mr. S.'s fine phraſes, *(in his preface)*, of "a man not acquainted "with the paths of ſcience)," than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reaſon to be aſſured of a thing which is capable of ſufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit to him have; and, as Mr. White ſays well, *(Anſwer to the Lord Falkland, p.* 33.), "ſatiſ-"faction is to be given to every one, according to his "capacity. It is ſufficient for a child to believe his pa-"rents; for a clown, to believe his preacher." And this is univerſally true in all caſes where we have not better or equal evidence to the contrary. But ſuch is the unhappineſs of the Popiſh doctrines, that if people

were

were permitted the free uſe of the ſcripture, they would eaſily diſcern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; ſo that it cannot be ſafe for their preachers to tell the people that the ſcripture is the only rule of faith, leſt they ſhould find cauſe not to believe them when they teach doctrines ſo plainly contrary to that rule.

§ 8. Laſtly, He ſays, *p.* 17. "The Proteſtants cannot be "certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture." Does he mean of plain texts, or obſcure ones? Of the true ſenſe of plain texts, I hope every one may be certain; and for obſcure ones, it is not neceſſary every one ſhould. But it may be there are no plain texts in the ſcriptures; then the reaſon of it muſt be, (till Mr. S. can ſhew a better), either becauſe it is impoſſible for any one to write plainly; or becauſe God cannot write ſo plainly as men; or becauſe we have good reaſon to think that he would not write things neceſſary for every one to believe, ſo as men might clearly underſtand him.

But he tells us, *p.* 17. "The numerous comments "upon ſcripture are an evidence that no man can be "certain of the true ſenſe of it." I hope not: for if thoſe numerous commentators do generally agree in the ſenſe of plain texts, (as it is certain they do), then this argument ſignifies nothing as to ſuch texts: and as for thoſe which are obſcure, let commentators differ about them as much as they pleaſe, ſo long as all neceſſary points of faith and matters of practice are delivered in plain texts. He adds, *p.* 17. "There are infinite diſ-"putes about the ſenſe of ſcripture, even in the moſt "concerning points, as in that of Chriſt's divinity." But are not commentators, both Proteſtant and Popiſh, generally agreed about the ſenſe of ſcripture in that point? And what if ſome out of prejudice do miſtake, or out of perverſeneſs do wreſt, the plaineſt texts of ſcripture for the divinity of Chriſt, to another ſenſe? is this any argument that thoſe texts are not ſufficiently plain? Can any thing be ſpoken or written in words ſo clear from ambiguity, which a perverſe or prejudiced mind ſhall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the ſcriptures for the froward and the captious, but for thoſe who will read them with a free

and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been converſant in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the divinity of Chriſt out of ſcripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpoſe. St. Chryſoſtom (*hom.* 32. *de conſubſtant.*) profeſſes to demonſtrate out of ſcripture, that "the Son is of the ſame ſubſtance "with the Father;" and relies upon ſcripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of argument: ſo that it ſeems St. Chryſoſtom was not acquainted with the inſufficiency of ſcripture for the conviction of hereticks in this point; and that he was either ignorant of the (infallible) way of demonſtrating this point from oral tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The ſame father elſewhere, arguing againſt hereticks about the divinity of Chriſt, ſays, (*hom.* 7. *de Sancto Phoca*), that "they pervert the ſcriptures, to ſtrengthen their hereſy "from thence." But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the ſcripture, and ſay, that this doctrine is not there delivered with ſufficient clearneſs; but contrary-ways he ſays, that "the ſcripture is clear enough, but "the corrupt minds of hereticks will not ſee what is "there contained." Had St. Chryſoſtom been a true ſon of the traditionary church, he would have laid hold of this occaſion to vilify the ſcriptures, and to ſhew the neceſſity of regulating our faith, not by ſuch uncertain records, but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

§ 9. But becauſe Mr. S. lays great weight (in ſeveral parts of his book) upon this exception againſt ſcripture, *viz.* "That Proteſtants cannot be certain of the true "ſenſe of it;" therefore I ſhall not content myſelf only to have ſhewn, that we may be ſufficiently certain of the ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as to underſtand all neceſſary matters of faith and practice, and that more than this is not neceſſary; but ſhall likewiſe return this exception upon him, by inquiring into theſe two things:

1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture than the Proteſtants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true ſenſe of tradition, than Proteſtants of the true ſenſe of ſcripture?

1*ſt*, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture than Proteſtants? They pretend to have an oral tradition of the true ſenſe of it, delivered down from father to ſon. But this only reacheth to thoſe texts which are coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine. As for all other parts of ſcripture, they are as uſeleſs to Papiſts, as they ſuppoſe they are to us; becauſe, wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for thoſe texts, the ſenſe whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this ſenſe is, I hope, delivered in ſome words or other. And have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurſes, the faculty of delivering this ſenſe in words ſo plain as cannot poſſibly be miſtaken, or wreſted to another ſenſe? I am ſorry, that, when every one hath this faculty of ſpeaking their thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be repreſented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himſelf? If the church have a certain ſenſe of ſcripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite diſputes about the ſenſe of it, in the moſt concerning points, *viz.* the efficacy of God's grace, the ſupremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a Pope and council by immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt? What a ſtir is made about the ſenſe of *Dabo tibi claves; Tu es Petrus, & ſuper hanc petram, &c.; Paſce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of theſe texts among themſelves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the Proteſtants? ſome underſtanding them of St. Peter's ſupremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or council from any immediate aſſiſtance, but only from the rational force of tradition, ſuppoſing that the Pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain ſenſe of theſe texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? If it have not, to uſe a hot phraſe of his own, *p.* 17. "it is perfect phrenzy to ſay they can "be certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture."

If he ſay, they are by tradition made certain of the true

true ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as it concerns the main body of Chriſtian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is ſufficient; then I aſk him, What are thoſe points of faith which make up the body of Chriſtian doctrine? He will tell me, They are thoſe which all Catholicks agree to have deſcended to them from the Apoſtles, by a conſtant and uninterrupted tradition. I inquire further, How I ſhall know what is the certain ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as it concerns theſe points? He muſt anſwer as before, That that is the true ſenſe which all Catholicks agree to have deſcended to them by tradition: which amounts to this, that all Catholicks do agree in the ſenſe of ſcripture ſo far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the Proteſtants, how much ſoever at preſent they differ about the ſenſe of ſcripture, may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a paſſage or two of Mr. Creſſy. The one in his *Appendix*, (*Exomolog. edit.* 2. *p.* 554.); where he tells us, that "as it is impoſſible "that hereticks ſhould agree any other way than in "faction, ſo it is impoſſible that Catholicks ſhould dif- "fer in points of faith." Why ſo? Were not thoſe Catholicks firſt who afterwards became hereticks? and, when they became ſo, did they not differ in points of belief? Yes. But here lies the conceit: When they began to differ, then they ceaſed to be Catholicks; therefore Catholicks can never differ in points of faith. The other paſſage is where he ſays, (*Exomolog. c.* 53. § 2.), that "he hath forſaken a church where unity was im- "poſſible, *&c.* and betaken himſelf to a church where "ſchiſm is impoſſible." This laſt clauſe, "That ſchiſm "is impoſſible in their church," cannot poſſibly be true, but in the ſame abſurd and ludicrous ſenſe in which it is impoſſible for Catholicks to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny, but that it is poſſible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his ſenſe is ſchiſm. But here is the ſubtilty of it. No ſchiſmatick is of their church, becauſe, ſo ſoon as he is a ſchiſmatick, he is out of it; therefore ſchiſm is impoſſible in their church. And is it not as impoſſible in the church of England? where Mr. Creſſy might have done

done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiſer reaſon of forſaking her.

§ 10. But to return to our purpoſe: Mr. Ruſhworth acknowledgeth, (*Dial.* 2. § 12.), that the ſcripture is of itſelf ſufficiently plain as to matters of practice: for he aſks, "Who is ſo blind as not to ſee, that theſe things "are to be found in ſcripture by a ſenſible, common, "and diſcreet reading of it, though perhaps, by a rigo- "rous and exact balancing of every particular word and "ſyllable, any of theſe things would vaniſh away we "know not how?" So that, for the direction of our lives and actions, he confeſſeth the ſcripture to be ſuffi- ciently plain, if men will but read it ſenſibly and diſ- creetly: and he ſays, that he is blind that does not ſee this. But who ſo blind as he that will not ſee, that the ſenſe of ſcripture is as plain in all neceſſary points of faith? I am ſure, St. Auſtin (*De doctr. Chriſt. l.* 2.) makes no difference, when he tells us, that "in thoſe things "which are plainly ſet down in ſcripture, we may find "all thoſe things in which faith, and manners of life, are "comprehended." And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith as well as of practice, read the ſcriptures ſenſibly and diſcreetly, without ſuch a rigorous balancing of every word and ſyllable as will make the ſenſe vaniſh away we know not how? If the ſcripture be but ſuffi- ciently plain to ſuch as will uſe it ſenſibly and diſcreet- ly, I do not underſtand what greater plainneſs can be deſired in a rule: nor can I imagine what kind of rule it muſt be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and ſuch as are bent to play the fool with it.

Well, ſuppoſe the ſcriptures be not ſufficiently clear as to matters of faith, and hereupon I have recourſe to the church for the true ſenſe of ſcripture, muſt I believe the church's ſenſe to be the true ſenſe of ſuch a text, though I ſee it to be plainly contrary to the genuine ſenſe of the words? Yes; that I muſt, or elſe I make myſelf, and not the church, judge of the ſenſe of ſcri- pture; which is the grand hereſy of the Proteſtants. But then I muſt not ſuppoſe, much leſs believe, that the church's ſenſe of ſuch a text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainy ſee it to be ſo. This is hard again, on the other hand; eſpecially if that

that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Creſſy, *viz.* that though general councils cannot miſtake in the points of faith which they decree, yet they may miſtake in the confirmation of them from texts of ſcripture; that is, they may be miſtaken about the ſenſe of thoſe texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may ſee this exemplified in the ſecond council of Nice, to mention no other; which, to eſtabliſh their doctrine of image-worſhip, does ſo palpably abuſe and wreſt texts of ſcripture, that I can hardly believe, that any Papiſt in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true ſenſe of thoſe texts which is there given by thoſe fathers.

§ 11. *2dly*, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of their traditional doctrines, than the Proteſtants can be of the true ſenſe of ſcripture? And this is worthy of our inquiry; becauſe, if the buſineſs be ſearched to the bottom, it will appear, (beſides all other inconveniencies which oral tradition is much more liable to than ſcripture), that the certain ſenſe and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the ſenſe of ſcripture. And this I will make appear by neceſſary conſequence from their own conceſſions. Mr. White and Mr. S. ſay, that the great ſecurity of tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phraſes and ſet forms of expreſſion, but the ſame ſenſe is conveyed, and ſettled in mens hearts by various expreſſions. But, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, this renders tradition's ſenſe uncertain: for he ſays, (*Dial.* 2. § 6,), "It is impoſ-"ſible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the ſame "ſenſe in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a ſenſible, common, diſcreet way, (as Mr. Ruſhworth ſpeaks concerning reading the ſcriptures), but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phraſe, word, and ſyllable, the ſenſe of tradition will be in the very ſame danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vaniſh we know not how. Dr. Holden (*Analyſ. fidei, l.* 1. *c.* 9.) lays down theſe two principles: "Firſt, That no truth can be conveyed down from "man to man, but by ſpeech; and ſpeech cannot be "but by words; and all words are either equivocal in "themſelves, or liable to be differently underſtood by "ſeveral

" ſeveral perſons. Secondly, That ſuch is the frame of " man's mind, that the ſame truths may be differently " apprehended and underſtood by different perſons." And if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be delivered by ſpeech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities, as to their ſenſe, as well as ſcripture. Mr. Creſſy (*Append. c. 6.*) tells us, that " reaſon and experience ſhew, that differences will ariſe " even about the writings of the fathers, and any thing " but the teſtimony of the preſent church." If this be true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if difference will ariſe about the writings of the fathers, how they are to be interpreted, I ſuppoſe the writings of councils will be liable to the ſame inconvenience: and if the whole preſent church cannot declare her ſenſe of any traditional doctrine, otherwiſe than by a council, unleſs with the Jeſuits they will epitomize the church into the Pope; and the decrees of a council cannot be univerſally diſperſed, or at leaſt never uſe to be, but by writing; and if differences will ariſe about the interpretation of that writing, as well as any other, then this preſent infallible authority, which Mr. Creſſy magnifies ſo much for ending of differences, leaves all controverſies ariſing about the ſenſe of tradition as indeterminable as ever: and they muſt for ever remain ſo, till general councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in words, which will ſo infallibly expreſs their meaning, to the moſt captious caviller, that no difference can poſſibly ariſe about the interpretation of them; or elſe, which will be more ſuitable to this wiſe hypotheſis, till general councils, being convinced by Mr. S.'s demonſtrations, ſhall come to underſtand themſelves ſo well, as not to intruſt their decrees any more to the uncertain way of writing, but for the future to communicate them to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And, to mention no more, Mr. Knott, (*Anſwer to Chillingworth, c. 2. § 6.*), who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain ſenſe of ſcripture is only to be had from the church, ſpeaks to this purpoſe, That before we can be certain that this is the true ſenſe of ſuch a text, we muſt either be certain that this text is capable of no other ſenſe, as figurative, myſtical, or moral; or if it be, we muſt

must have some certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken; which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then, by a fair parity of reason, before I can be certain that this is the sense of a doctrinal tradition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expressed, when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense, as figurative, mystical, or moral, besides that in which I understood them; or if they be, as certainly they will be, capable of any of these other senses, then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken. And this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a text of scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a traditionary doctrine may, by different expressions, be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: for if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate, either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other sense: I say, if this cavil will hold, then every new expression, whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine, is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the sense of their traditional doctrines, than Protestants may be of the sense of scripture.

§ 12. These are his exceptions contained in his second discourse; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these defects might in part be provided against "by history, by the providence of God, by testi-"monies of councils and fathers, and by the sufficient "clearness of scripture as to fundamentals;" he endeavours to shew, that these signify little to this purpose.

1*st*, "Not history; because few are skilled in history; "and they that are not, cannot safely rely upon those "that are skilled, unless they knew certainly, that the "historians whom they rely on, had secure grounds,

"and

" and not bare hearſay, for what they writ; and that " they were not contradicted by others, either extant or " periſhed," *p.* 17. 18. How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled hiſtory by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of ſkill, I have already ſhewn. I ſhall only add now, that if this reaſoning be true, it is impoſſible for any man to be certain, by hiſtory, of any ancient matter of fact; as, namely, that there were ſuch perſons as Julius Cæſar and William the Conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England; becauſe, according to him, we cannot know certainly, that the hiſtorians who relate theſe things, and upon whoſe authority we rely, " had ſecure grounds, and not bare hear- " ſay, for what they writ." And " that they were not " contradicted by others, either extant or periſhed," is, I am ſure, impoſſible for any man to know: for who can tell now what was contained in thoſe books which are periſhed? So that if this be requiſite to make every hiſtorical relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of thoſe books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient fact or hiſtory. For who knows certainly, that ſome books that are periſhed, did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? Nay, if this reaſoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition. For what though the prieſt tell me this was the doctrine of Chriſt delivered to him? Unleſs I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his teſtimony. Nor then neither, in Mr. Knott's opinion, (*Anſw. to Chillingworth, c.* 1. § 33.); " becauſe the " teſtimony of preachers or paſtors is human and fal- " lible, unleſs (according to his jargon) a concluſion " deduced from premiſſes, one of which is only pro- " bable, may be ſufficient to bring our underſtanding " to an infallible act of faith, *viz.* if ſuch a conclu- " ſion be taken *ſpecificativè*; whereas, if it be taken *re-* " *duplicativè*, as it is a concluſion, it can only beget a " probable aſſent:" which is to ſay, that conſidered barely as a concluſion, and ſo far as in reaſon it can deſerve aſſent, it is only probable; but conſidered as it ſerves an hypotheſis, and is convenient to be believed

with reaſon or without, ſo it is infallible. But to carry the ſuppoſition farther: Put the caſe, that the whole preſent age aſſembled in a general council, ſhould declare that ſuch a point was delivered to them; yet, according to Mr. S. we cannot ſafely rely upon this, unleſs we knew certainly, that thoſe whom they relied on, "had ſecure grounds, and not bare hearſay, for what "they delivered; and that they were not contradicted "within the ſpace of 1500 years, by any of thoſe that "are dead;" which is impoſſible for any one now to know.

But to ſhew how inconſiſtent he is with himſelf in theſe matters, I will preſent the reader with a paſſage or two in another part of his book, where he endeavours to prove, that men may ſafely rely on a general and uncontrolled tradition. He tells us, *p.* 49. that "the "common courſe of human converſation makes it madneſs, not to believe great multitudes of knowers, if no "poſſible conſiderations can awaken in our reaſon a "doubt that they conſpire to deceive us." And a little after, *ibid.* "Nor can any, unleſs their brains rove "wildly, or be unſettled even to the degree of madneſs, "ſuſpect deceit, where ſuch multitudes agree unanimouſly "in a matter of fact." Now, if men be but ſuppoſed to write, as well as to ſpeak, what they know, and to agree in their writings about matter of fact; then it will be the ſame "madneſs, not to believe multitudes of hiſtorians, where no poſſible conſideration can awaken in "our reaſon a doubt that they have conſpired to deceive "us; and mens brains muſt rove wildly, and be unſettled even to the degree of frenzy, who ſuſpect deceit where ſuch multitudes unanimouſly agree in a "matter of fact." And this ſeems to be the great unhappineſs of Mr. S.'s demonſtrations, that they proceed upon contradictory principles; ſo that, in order to the demonſtrating of the uncertainty of books and writings, he muſt ſuppoſe all thoſe principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be ſelf-evident and unqueſtionable when he is to demonſtrate the infallibility of oral tradition.

§ 13. 2*dly*, He tells us, *p.* 18. "The providence of "God is no ſecurity againſt thoſe contingencies the "ſcriptures

" ſcriptures are ſubject to; becauſe we cannot be cer-
" tain of divine providence, or aſſiſtance to his church,
" but by letter of ſcripture; therefore that muſt firſt be
" proved certain, before we mention the church, or
" God's aſſiſtance to her:" As if we pretended there were any promiſe in ſcripture, that God would preſerve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwiſe be aſſured of it; as if the light of natural reaſon could not aſſure us of God's providence in general, and of his more eſpecial care of thoſe things which are of greateſt concernment to us; ſuch as this is, that a book containing the method and the terms of ſalvation, ſhould be preſerved from any material corruption. He might as well have ſaid, that without the letter of ſcripture we cannot know that there is a God.

§ 14. 3*dly*, " Nor (ſays he, *p.* 18. 19.) can teſtimo-
" nies of councils and fathers be ſufficient interpreters
" of ſcripture." We do not ſay they are. Our principle is, That the ſcripture doth ſufficiently interpret itſelf, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. And the general conſent of fathers in this doctrine of the ſufficient plainneſs of ſcripture (which I ſhall afterwards ſhew) is a good evidence againſt them. As for obſcure and more doubtful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpretation. And that the Papiſts think ſo as well as we, is plain; inaſmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ among themſelves in the interpretation of ſeveral texts: and nothing is more familiar in all Popiſh commentators, than to differ from the ancient fathers about the ſenſe of ſcripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Creſſy (as I ſaid before) do not think it neceſſary to believe that always to be the true ſenſe of texts which councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm points of faith. Nay, if any controverſy ariſe about the ſenſe of any text of ſcripture, it is impoſſible, according to Mr. Ruſhworth's principles, for a council to decide either that, or any other controverſy: for (*Dial.* 2. § 8.) he makes it his buſineſs to prove, that controverſies cannot be decided by words: and if this be ſo, then they cannot be decided at all, unleſs he can prove, that they may be de-

cided without words, and consequently that councils may do their work best in the Quakers way, by silent meetings.

§ 15. 4*thly*, "Nor can (says he, *p.* 20. 21.) the clearness of scripture as to fundamentals, be any help against these defects." Why not?

1. "Because a certain catalogue of fundamentals was "never given and agreed to by sufficient authority; "and yet without this all goes to wreck." I hope not, so long as we are sure that God would make nothing necessary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and so long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed, (which is every one's fault if he do not), men may do well enough without a precise catalogue. But suppose we say, that the articles of the Apostles creed contain all necessary matters of simple belief, what hath Mr. S. to say against this? I am sure the Roman catechism, set forth by the decree of the council of Trent, says (*præfat.*) as much as this comes to; *viz.* "That "the Apostles having received a command to preach the "gospel to every creature, thought fit to compose a "form of Christian faith, namely to this end, that they "might all think and speak the same things, and that "there might be no schisms among those whom they "had called to the unity of faith; but that they might "all be perfect in the same sense and the same opinion: "and this profession of the Christian faith and hope, so "framed by them, the Apostles called *the symbol* or *creed*." Now, how this end of bringing men to unity of faith, and making them perfectly of the same sense and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain all necessary points of simple belief, I can by no means understand. Besides, a certain catalogue of fundamentals is as necessary for them as for us; and when M. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had a great desire to have seen Mr. Knott's catalogue of fundamentals; and challenged him to produce it; and offered him very fairly, that whenever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: but Mr. Knott, though he still persisted in the same demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a secret to his dying day.

But,

But, to put a final ſtop to this canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals, which yet I perceive I ſhall never be able to do, becauſe it is one of thoſe expletive topicks which Popiſh writers, eſpecially thoſe of the loweſt form, do generally make uſe of to help out a book; however, to do what I can towards the ſtopping of it, I deſire Mr. S. to anſwer the reaſons whereby his friend Dr. Holden (*Analyſ. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 4.) ſhews the unreaſonableneſs of this demand; and likewiſe endeavours to prove that ſuch a catalogue would not only be uſeleſs and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifeſtly impoſſible to give ſuch a preciſe catalogue.

2. He aſks, *p.* 21. "Is it a fundamental, that Chriſt "is God? If ſo, whether this be clearer in ſcripture, "than that God hath hands, feet, *&c.*?" To which I anſwer by another queſtion, Is it clear, that there are figures in ſcripture, and that many things are ſpoken after the manner of men, and by way of condeſcenſion and accommodation to our capacities; and that cuſtom and common ſenſe teacheth men to diſtinguiſh between things figuratively and properly ſpoken? If ſo, why cannot every one eaſily underſtand, that when the ſcripture ſaith, *God hath hands and feet*, and that *Chriſt is the vine*, and *the door*, theſe are not to be taken properly, as we take this propoſition, that "Chriſt is God;" in which no man hath any reaſon to ſuſpect a figure? When Mr. S. tells us, that "he percheth upon the ſpecifical nature "of things," would it not offend him, if any one ſhould be ſo ſilly as to conclude from hence, that Mr. S. believed himſelf to be a bird, and nature a perch? And yet not only the ſcriptures, but all ſober writers, are free from ſuch forced and phantaſtical metaphors. I remember, that Origen (*l.* 4.) taxeth Celſus's wilful ignorance, in finding fault with the ſcriptures, for "attributing to "God human affections, as anger, *&c.*;" and tells him, "that any one who had a mind to underſtand the "ſcriptures, might eaſily ſee, that ſuch expreſſions were "accommodated to us, and accordingly to be underſtood; and that no man that will but compare theſe "expreſſions with other paſſages of ſcripture, need to "fail of the true ſenſe of them." But, according to Mr. S., Origen was to blame to find fault with Celſus,

for thinking that the ſcripture did really attribute human affections to God; for how could he think otherwiſe, when "the moſt fundamental point is not clearer in ſcripture, "than that God hath hands, feet, *&c.*?" How could Origen in reaſon expect from Celſus, (though never ſo great a philoſopher), that he ſhould be able, without the help of oral tradition, to diſtinguiſh between what is ſpoken literally, and what by a certain ſcheme of ſpeech? Theodoret (*Hæret. fabul l.* 4.) tells us of one Audæus, who held that God had a human ſhape and bodily members; but he does not ſay, that the reaſon of this error was becauſe he made ſcripture the rule of his faith, but expreſsly becauſe "he was a fool, and did fooliſhly underſtand "thoſe things which the divine ſcriptures ſpeak by way "of condeſcenſion." So that although Mr. S. is pleaſed to make this wiſe objection, yet it ſeems, according to Theodoret, that men do not miſtake ſuch texts, either for want of oral tradition, or of ſufficient clearneſs in the ſcriptures, but for want of common reaſon and ſenſe. And if Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is ſecure from all poſſibility of being miſtaken by fooliſh and perverſe men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its ſake.

SECT. IV. *That ſcripture is a ſufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the moſt rational doubters.*

§ 1. IN his next diſcourſe, he endeavours to ſhew, that unlearned perſons cannot be juſtified as acting rationally in receiving the ſcripture for the word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule; becauſe they are not capable of ſatisfaction concerning theſe matters. But I have already ſhewn that they are, and ſhall not repeat the ſame over again. And whereas he ſays, *p.* 24. That "ſeveral profeſſions all pretend to ſcripture, and "yet differ, and damn, and perſecute one another a"bout theſe differences;" the anſwer is eaſy: That they all pretend to ſcripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of God, and the rule of faith; and that they are generally agreed about the ſenſe of thoſe plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident, in that thoſe ſeveral profeſſions

ſions acknowledge the articles contained in the Apoſtles creed to be ſufficiently delivered in ſcripture: and if any profeſſions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obſcure, but that ſome men are perverſe. And if thoſe profeſſions damn and perſecute one another about the meaning of obſcure texts, the ſcripture is not in fault, but thoſe that do ſo.

§ 2. And whereas he pretends, *p.* 25. 26. 27. that "the ſcripture is not able to ſatisfy ſceptical diſſenters "and rational doubters, becauſe nothing under a de- "monſtration can ſatisfy ſuch perſons ſo well concern- "ing the incorruptedneſs of originals, the faithfulneſs of "tranſlations, *&c.* but that ſearching and ſincere wits "may ſtill maintain their ground of ſuſpence with a "Might it not be otherwiſe?" This hath been anſwered already, partly by ſhewing, that the ſcripture was not intended to ſatisfy ſcepticks, and that a demonſtration is not ſufficient to give ſatisfaction to them; and partly, by ſhewing, that rational doubters may have as much ſatisfaction concerning thoſe matters, as the nature of the thing will bear: and he is not a rational doubter that deſires more.

But, that he may ſee the unreaſonableneſs of this diſcourſe, I ſhall briefly ſhew him, that all mankind do, in matters of this nature, accept of ſuch evidence as falls ſhort of demonſtration; and that his great friends and maſters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book, though he manageth them to leſs advantage, do frequently acknowledge, that it is reaſonable for men to acquieſce in ſuch aſſurance as falls ſhort of infallibility, and ſuch evidence as is leſs than demonſtration. Do not mankind think themſelves ſufficiently aſſured of the antiquity and authors of ſeveral books for which they have not demonſtrative evidence? Doth not Ariſtotle ſay, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonſtration; and that it is madneſs to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no paſſages in books ſo plain, that a man may be ſufficiently ſatisfied, that this and no other is the certain ſenſe of them? If there be none, can any thing be ſpoken in plainer words than it may be written? If it cannot, how can we be ſatisfied

of

of the certain ſenſe of any doctrine orally delivered? And, if we cannot be ſo ſatisfied, where is the certainty of oral tradition? But if books may be written ſo plainly as that we may be abundantly ſatisfied, that this is the certain ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages, then we may reaſonably reſt ſatisfied in evidence for theſe matters ſhort of demonſtration. For was ever the ſenſe of any words ſo plain as that there did not remain this ground of ſuſpence, that thoſe words might be capable of another ſenſe? Mr. Ruſhworth (*Dialog.* 2. § 7.) ſays, that "diſputative ſcholars do find means daily to explicate "the plaineſt words of an author to a quite different "ſenſe." And that the world might be furniſhed with an advantageous inſtance of the poſſibility of this, Raynaudus, (*De bonis & malis libris*), a writer of their own, hath made a wanton experiment upon the Apoſtles creed; and, by a ſiniſter, but poſſible interpretation, hath made every article of it hereſy and blaſphemy, on purpoſe to ſhew, that the plaineſt words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the Apoſtles, and can deliver the Chriſtian doctrine ſo clearly, that he can demonſtrate it impoſſible for any man to put any other ſenſe upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not what know may be done: but, if Mr. S. doth this, he muſt both amend his ſtyle, and his way of demonſtration.

Is Mr. S. ſufficiently aſſured, that there is ſuch a part of the world as America? and can he demonſtrate this to any man without carrying him thither? Can he ſhew, by any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the relations concerning that place ſhould be falſe? When his demonſtrations have done their utmoſt, cannot "a ſearching and ſincere wit at leaſt maintain "his ground of ſuſpence with a Might it not be other-"wiſe?" *p.* 27.; and with an Is it not poſſible, that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have made uſe of their privilege, to abuſe the world by falſe reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all thoſe who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to ſome other parts of the world, and, taking pleaſure in abuſing others, in the ſame manner as they have been impoſed upon themſelves,

themſelves, may ſay they have been at America? Who can tell but all this may be ſo? And yet I ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding the poſſibility of this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſſed with ſo incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions. We have no demonſtration for theſe things; and we expect none, becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe name it bears, or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it. It is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe; that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well aſſured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it. For a bare poſſibility, that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people of France may die this night; but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible the ſun may not riſe to-morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

§ 3. But becauſe this principle, *viz.* "That in matters of religion a man cannot be reaſonably ſatisfied "with any thing leſs than that infallible aſſurance which "is wrought by demonſtration," is the main pillar of Mr. S.'s book; therefore, beſide what hath been already ſaid, to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this principle, I ſhall take a little pains to manifeſt to him, how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of his brethren of the tradition, *viz.* Mr. Ruſhworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Creſſy, and Mr. White; who, beſides Mr. S. and one I. B. are, ſo far as I can learn, all the publick patrons that ever this hypotheſis of oral tradition hath had in the world: and if Mr. White, as I have reaſon to believe, was the author of thoſe dialogues which paſs under Ruſhworth's name, the number of them is yet leſs. Now, if I can ſhew, that this principle, eſteemed by Mr. S. ſo fundamental to this hypotheſis, is plainly contradicted by the principal aſſerters of oral tradition, I ſhall hereby gain one of theſe two things; either that theſe great patrons

patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypotheſis, or that this principle is not neceſſary for the ſupport of it. Not that I would be ſo underſtood as if I did deny, that theſe very perſons do ſometimes ſpeak very big words of the neceſſity of infallibility. But if it be their pleaſure to contradict themſelves, as I have no reaſon to be diſpleaſed, ſo neither to be concerned for it; but ſhall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them firſt to themſelves; and then, if he pleaſes, afterwards to himſelf.

§ 4. I begin with Mr. Ruſhworth, of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his, to perſuade the world, that, notwithſtanding he was the firſt inventor of this hypotheſis of oral tradition, yet he could prove, that the church had in all ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her only rule of faith. He, in his third dialogue, § 3. & 4. when his nephew objects to him, "That perhaps "a Proteſtant would ſay, that all his foregoing diſcourſe "was but probability and likelihood; and therefore, to "hazard a man's eſtate upon peradventures, were "ſomething hard, and not very rationally done," replies thus to him: "What ſecurity do your merchants, "your ſtateſmen, your ſoldiers, thoſe that go to law, "nay, even thoſe that till your grounds, and work for "their livings; what ſecurity, I ſay, do all theſe go "upon? Is it greater than the ſecurity which theſe "grounds afford? Surely no; and yet no man eſteems "them fooliſh. All human affairs are hazardous, and "have ſome adventure in them: and therefore he who "requires evident certainty only in matters of religion, "diſcovers in himſelf a leſs mind to the goods promi-"ſed in the next life, than to theſe which he ſeeks here "in this world upon weaker aſſurance. Howſoever, "the greateſt evidence that can be to him that is not "capable of convincing demonſtrations, which the "greateſt part of mankind fall ſhort of, is but con-"jectural." So that, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, it is not reaſon and diſcretion, but want of love to God and religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of religion than for human affairs; which yet, he tells us, "are hazardous, and have ſome adven-"ture in them," and conſequently are not capable of demonſtration.

demonſtration. Beſides, if demonſtrative evidence be an eſſential property of the rule of faith, as Mr. S. affirms, then this rule cannot, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, be of any uſe to the greateſt part of mankind, becauſe they are not capable of convincing demonſtrations. Again, "do but conſider (ſays he, *ibid.* § 6.) "how unequal and unjuſt a condition it is, that the "claim of the preſent church ſhall not be heard, unleſs "ſhe can confute all the peradventures that wit may "invent, and ſolve all the arguments which the infi- "nite variety of time, place, and occaſions, may have "given way unto; and then you will ſee how unreaſonable "an adverſary he is, who will not be content with any "ſatisfaction but ſuch as man's nature ſcarcely af- "fords." And is it not equally unjuſt in Mr. S. not to let ſcripture's claim be heard, unleſs we can confute every peradventure and Might it not be otherwiſe that wit may invent? See, then, how unreaſonable an adverſary Mr. S. is, who will not be content with any ſatisfaction but ſuch as, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, man's nature ſcarcely affords.

Dr. Holden (I confeſs) ſtates the matter ſomewhat cautiouſly, when he tells us, *l.* 1. *c.* 1, that "it ſhall "ſuffice for the preſent to determine, that the wiſdom "of the Creator hath afforded us ſuch an aſſurance, "eſpecially of truths neceſſary to ſalvation, as is ſuita- "ble to our nature, and beſt fitted for the ſafe conduct "of our lives in moral and religious affairs." But if we interpret theſe general expreſſions by the paſſages I before cited out of Mr. Ruſhworth, (as in reaſon we may, ſince the Doctor is beholden to him for the beſt part of his book), then nothing can make more againſt Mr. S.'s principle.

§ 5. Mr. Creſſy, in his *Exomologeſis*, *c.* 19. § 5. ſays, that "ſuch teachers as approached neareſt to the "fountain of truth, Chriſt and his Apoſtles, had means "of informing themſelves in apoſtolical tradition in- "comparably beyond us." Mr. S. may do well to ſhew what thoſe means were, which are ſo incomparably beyond his infallibility and demonſtration. The ſame author (*c.* 32. § 4.) does very much applaud Stapleton's determination of the queſtion concerning the church's infallibility;

infallibility; which is as follows, "That the church does "not expect to be taught by God immediately by new "revelations, but makes use of several means, *&c.* as "being governed, not by Apostles, *&c.* but by ordina- "ry pastors and teachers: That these pastors, in ma- "king use of these several means of decision, proceed, "not, as the Apostles did, with a peculiar infallible di- "rection of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential col- "lection not always necessary: That to the Apostles, "who were the first masters of evangelical faith, and "founders of the church, such an infallible certitude of "means was necessary; not so now to the church, *&c.*" If this be true, that an infallible certitude of means is not now necessary to the church, and that her pastors do now, in deciding matters of faith, proceed only with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem, that a searching wit may maintain his ground of suspence, even against their church also, with a "Might "it not be otherwise?" Again, Mr. Cressy tells us, (*Append. c.* 5.), that "truth, and our obligation to "believe it, is in an higher degree in scripture than in "the decisions of the church, as Bellarmine acknow- "ledges:" which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contained in the scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine from the determination of the church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of truths delivered to us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him, what that higher degree of assurance is, which Mr. Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that, (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of), that Mr. Cressy, by his approbation of this determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the scripture above the church, as to one of the most essential properties of the rule of faith, *viz.* the certainty of it.

But the most eminent testimony to my purpose in Mr. Cressy, is that famous passage (*c.* 40. § 3. *&c.*) which hath given so much offence to several of his own church, wherein he acknowledges "the unfortunateness (to him) "of the word *infallibility*;" and tells us, "that he "could find no such word in any council; that no "necessity

" neceſſity appeared to him, that either he, or any o-
" ther Proteſtant, ſhould ever have heard that word na-
" med, and much leſs preſſed with ſo much earneſtneſs,
" as of late it has generally been in diſputations and
" books of controverſy: and that Mr. Chillingworth
" combats this word with too great ſucceſs; inſomuch
" that if this word were once forgotten, or but laid by,
" Mr. Chillingworth's arguments would loſe the greateſt
" part of their ſtrength; and that if this word were
" confined to the ſchools, where it was bred, there
" would be ſtill no inconvenience: and that, ſince by
" manifeſt experience the Engliſh Proteſtants think
" themſelves ſo ſecure, when they have leave to ſtand
" or fall by that word, and in very deed have ſo much
" to ſay for themſelves when they are preſſed unneceſſa-
" rily with it; ſince likewiſe it is a word capable of ſo
" high a ſenſe, that we cannot deviſe one more full
" and proper to attribute to God himſelf, *&c.*:" ſince all this is ſo, he thinks he cannot be " blamed, if ſuch
" reaſons move him to wiſh, that the Proteſtants may
" never be invited to combat the authority of the church
" under that notion." A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as croſs to Mr. S.'s principle as any thing can be. But the word *infallibility* was not ſo unfortunate to Mr. Creſſy, as his untoward explication of the forecited paſſage in his *Appendix*; which he afterwards publiſhed, chiefly by way of vindication of himſelf, againſt the learned author of the preface to my Lord Falkland's *Diſcourſe of infallibility*. There (*Append.* § 2. & 3.) he tells us, that " there are ſeveral degrees
" of infallibility." And that we may know what degrees of infallibility he thinks neceſſary to be attributed to the church, this following paſſage will inform us:
" Methinks (he ſays) if God have furniſhed his divine
" and ſupernatural truth with evidence equal to this, that
" the ſun will ſhine to-morrow, or that there will be a
" ſpring and harveſt next year, we are infinitely obli-
" ged to bleſs his providence; and juſtly condemned,
" if we refuſe to believe the leaſt of ſuch truths, as
" ſhewing leſs affection to ſave our ſouls, than the dull
" plowmen to ſow their corn, who certainly have far
" leſs evidence for their harveſt, than Catholicks for their

" faith; and yet they inſiſt not peeviſhly upon every " capricious objection, nor exact an infallible ſecurity of " a plentiful reaping next ſummer, but, notwithſtanding " all difficulties and contingencies, proceed chearfully in " their painful huſbandry." So that, according to this diſcourſe, whatever degree of aſſurance the church hath, or can give to thoſe who rely upon her, it is plain, that no further degree is neceſſary, than what the huſbandman, when he ſows, hath of a plentiful harveſt; and that men are juſtly condemned, if they refuſe to believe the leaſt truth upon ſuch ſecurity, which yet, by his own acknowledgment, is liable to contingencies: nay farther, that men are not reaſonable, but " peeviſh, in " exacting infallible ſecurity, and inſiſting upon every " capricious objection," ſuch as is Mr. S.'s " Might it " not be otherwiſe?" Now, as to this degree of aſſurance, or (as he calls it) infallibility, I cannot but grant what he ſays of it to be moſt true; *viz.* that " in a ſevere acceptation of the word, it is not rigo- " rouſly infallible;" that is, (as he explains it), it is not abſolutely impoſſible, nor does it imply a flat contradiction, that the thing whereof we are ſo aſſured may be otherwiſe: but then I utterly deny, that according to any true acceptation of this word, ſuch a degree of aſſurance as he ſpeaks of, can be called infallibility; and withal I affirm, that none of thoſe ſeveral degrees of infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an abſolute impoſſibility, can with any tolerable propriety of ſpeech, or regard to the true meaning and uſe of the word, have the name of infallibility given to them. For infallibility can ſignify nothing elſe, but an utter impoſſibility that one ſhould be deceived in that matter as to which he is ſuppoſed to be infallible; and to ſay ſuch a thing is impoſſible, is to ſay, that the exiſtence of it implies a flat contradiction: ſo that, whoſoever aſſerts degrees of infallibility, is obliged to ſhew, that there are degrees of abſolute impoſſibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he had need of a very ſharp and piercing wit, that is to find out degrees, where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in reſpect of the objects of knowledge, it is eaſy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to more objects

objects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance, (of which Mr. Cressy speaks), it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of all possibility of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible: for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all possibility of being deceived; and whosoever is less than this, is not infallible; because he only is so, who is out of all possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible. So that Mr. Cressy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible, (for that can have no degrees), but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been, that, by the means of such a cloud, he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamours of his own church, and the advantage which his adversaries made of his free and open discourse against infallibility. For any one that carefully reads his book, will find, that he understands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but "an authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her decisions;" which is no more, but what every supreme civil judge hath in matters, *viz.* a power to determine those controversies that lie before him as well as he can or will; and when that is done, every one is bound to submit to such determinations: but yet for all this, no man ever dreamed a supreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the church's authority: but if she have no other infallibility, but what a full authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and disingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of these words of his own, *viz.* "Against this "word *infallibility* Mr. Chillingworth's book especially "combats, and this with too too great success;" which in his *Appendix*, *c.* 5. § 6. he interprets thus: "Success, I mean, not against the church, but against his "own soul, and the souls of his fellow English Protestants, *&c.*:" As if one that had wished well to

" Cæſar, ſhould have ſaid, " that Pompey had fought " againſt him with too too great ſucceſs;" and being afterwards challenged by Cæſar's party, as having ſaid, that Pompey had conquered Cæſar, he ſhould explain himſelf thus: " Succeſs, I mean, not againſt Cæſar, but " againſt his own life, and the lives of his followers." Can any thing be finer than for any man to ſay, that by Pompey's ſucceſs in fighting againſt Cæſar, he means, that Cæſar had beaten Pompey? Which is no more than if one ſhould take the liberty to interpret white by black.

§ 6. Mr. White doth moſt expreſsly contradict this principle of Mr. S.'s, in theſe following paſſages. In his preface to Mr. Ruſhworth, he ſays, that " ſuch a cer- " tainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame ef- " fect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility " of working otherwiſe, ought abſolutely to be reckon- " ed in the degree of true certainty; and that thoſe au- " thors are miſtaken who undervalue it." So that it ſeems Mr. S. is miſtaken in affirming, that a man cannot be certain of any thing ſo long as there is any poſſibility that it may be otherwiſe. In his anſwer to my Lord Falkland, he ſays, *p.* 14. 15. that " in moral " matters, and ſuch as are ſubject to human action, we " muſt expect ſuch aſſurance as human actions bear. " If for the government of your ſpiritual life, you have " as much as for the management of your natural and " civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three " witneſſes of men beyond exception will caſt a man out " of, not only his lands, but life, and all. He that a- " mong merchants will not adventure where there is a " hundred to one of gaining, will be accounted a ſilly " factor; and among ſoldiers, he that will fear danger " where but one of a hundred is ſlain, ſhall not eſcape " the ſtain of cowardice. What then ſhall we expect in " religion, but to ſee a main advantage on the one ſide, " which we may reſt ourſelves on; and for the reſt, " remember we are men ſubject to chance and mutabili- " ty; and thank God he hath given us that aſſurance in " a ſupernatural way, which we are contented withal in " our civil ventures and poſſeſſions; which, neverthe- " leſs, God knoweth we often love better, and would " hazard leſs than the unknown good of the life to " come?"

"come?" Again, *p.* 30. "If God almighty hath in all "forts and manners provided his church, that she may "enlighten every man in his way that goeth the way of "a man; then let every man consider which is the fit "way for himself, and what in other matters of that "way be accounteth evidence. And if there be no in-"terest in his soul to make him loth to believe what in "another matter of the like nature he doth not stick at, "or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I "fear not his choice." Once more, directing a man in his search after rational satisfaction in matters of religion, he hath this passage, *p.* 46. "Besides this, he must have "this care, that he seek what the nature of the subject "can yield; and not as those physicians, who, when "they have promised no less than immortality, can at "last only reach to some conservation of health or youth "in some small degree: so I could wish the author to "well assure himself, first that there is possibly an in-"fallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented "with nothing less. For what if human nature should "not be capable of so great a good? Would he there-"fore think it fitting to live without any religion, be-"cause he could not get such a one as himself desired, "though with more than a man's wish? Were it not "rational to see, whether, among religions, some one "have not such notable advantages over the rest, as in "reason it might seem human nature might be content-"ed withal? Let him cast his account with the dearest "things he hath, his own or friends lives, his estate, "his hope of posterity, and see upon what terms of ad-"vantage he is ready to venture all these; and then "return to religion, and see whether, if he do not ven-"ture his soul upon the like, it be truly reason, or some "other not confessed motive, which withdraws him. "For my own part, as I doubt not of an infallibility, "so I doubt not but, setting that aside, there be those ex-"cellencies found on the Catholick party which may "force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath "upon it, before all other religions and sects in the world. "Why then may not one who, after long searching, "findeth no infallibility, rest himself on the like, sup-"posing man's nature affords no better?"

Are not theſe fair conceſſions, which the evidence and force of truth have extorted from theſe authors? ſo that it ſeems that that which Mr. S. calls *a civil piece of Atheiſtry*, (*Letter to his anſwerer*, *p.* 5.), is advanced in moſt expreſs words by his beſt friends; and therefore I hope he will (as he threatens me) "be ſmart with them "in oppoſition to ſo damnable and fundamental an er-"ror." And whenever he attempts this, I would intreat him to remember, that he hath theſe two things to prove: 1. That no evidence but demonſtration can give a man ſufficient aſſurance of any thing. 2. That a bare poſſibility that a thing may be otherwiſe, is a rational cauſe of doubting, and a wiſe ground of ſuſpence. Which when he hath proved, I ſhall not grudge him his infallibility.

SECT. V. *That ſcripture is ſufficient to convince the moſt acute adverſaries, and that it is ſufficiently certain.*

§ 1. THE laſt part of this third diſcourſe endeavours to ſhew, "That the ſcripture is not convictive "of the moſt obſtinate and acute adverſaries." As for the obſtinate, he knows my mind already. Let us ſee why the moſt acute adverſary may not be convinced by ſcripture. "Becauſe, (as he objects, *p.* 28.), 1. we can-"not be certain that this book is God's word, becauſe "of the many ſtrange abſurdities and hereſies in the o-"pen letter as it lies; as that God hath hands and "feet, *&c.* and becauſe of the contradictions in it." To which I have already returned an anſwer. "2. Becauſe "(as he ſaith, *p.* 31.) we cannot be certain of the truth "of the letter in any particular text, that it was not "foiſted in, or ſome way altered in its ſignificativeneſs; "and if it be a negative propoſition, that the particle "*not* was not inſerted; if affirmative, not left out." And if we pretend to be certain of this, he demands our demonſtration for it, *p.* 31. But how unreaſonable this demand is, I hope I have ſufficiently ſhewn. And to ſhew it yet farther, I aſk him, How their church knows that the particle *not* was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready anſwer, *viz.* by oral tradition. But this (according to him,

him, *p.* 116.) only reaches to "ſcripture's letter, ſo far "as it is coincident with the main body of Chriſtian "doctrine;" concerning the reſt of ſcripture it is impoſſible, (according to his own principles), that they ſhould have any ſecurity that the particle *not* was not unduly inſerted, or left out, by the tranſcribers. Nay, as to thoſe texts of ſcripture which fall in with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine, I demand his demonſtration, that the particle *not* was not unduly inſerted or left out, not only in thoſe texts, but alſo in the oral tradition of the doctrines coincident with the ſenſe of thoſe texts. If he ſay, it was impoſſible any age ſhould conſpire to leave out or inſert the particle *not* in the oral tradition; ſo ſay I it was that they ſhould conſpire to leave it out of the written text: but then I differ from him thus far, that I do not think this naturally impoſſible, ſo as that it can rigorouſly be demonſtrated; but only morally impoſſible, ſo that no body hath any reaſon to doubt of it; which, to a prudent man is as good as a demonſtration. Pyrrho himſelf never advanced any principle of ſcepticiſm beyond this, *viz.* That men ought to queſtion the credit of all books, concerning which they cannot demonſtrate as to every ſentence in them, that the particle *not* was not inſerted, if it be affirmative; or left out, if it be negative. If ſo much be required to free a man from reaſonable doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that have attained to infallibility? What he ſaith (*p.* 32.) concerning the *variæ lectiones* of ſcripture, hath already had a ſufficient anſwer.

§ 2. In his fourth diſcourſe he endeavours to ſhew, *p.* 33. that "the ſcripture is not certain in itſelf; and "conſequently, not aſcertained to us." 1*ſt*, "Not "certain, materially conſidered, as conſiſting of ſuch "and ſuch characters; becauſe books are liable to be "burnt, torn, blotted, worn out," *p.* 34. We grant it is not impoſſible but that any, or all the books in the world may be burnt: but then we ſay likewiſe, that a book ſo univerſally diſperſed, may eaſily be preſerved; though we have no aſſurance that God will preſerve it, in caſe all men ſhould be ſo fooliſh or ſo careleſs as to endeavour or ſuffer the abolition of it. But it ſeems the ſcriptures cannot be a rule of faith, if they be liable to any

any external accidents: and this he tells us, *p.* 34. "Though it may ſeem a remote and impertinent exception, yet to one who conſiders the wiſe diſpoſitions of divine providence, it will deſerve a deep conſideration; becauſe the ſalvation of mankind being the end of God's making nature, the means to it ſhould be more ſettled, ſtrong and unalterable, than any other piece of nature whatever." But, notwithſtanding this wiſe reaſon, this exception ſtill ſeems to me both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls a reaſon be a truth, it will from thence neceſſarily follow, not only that the doctrine of Chriſt muſt be conveyed by ſuch a means as is more unalterable than the courſe of nature; but alſo, by a clear parity of reaſon, that all the means of our ſalvation do operate towards the accompliſhing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the ſun ſhines; which they can never do, unleſs they operate more neceſſarily than any natural cauſes. How they can do ſo upon voluntary agents, I deſire Mr. S. to inform me.

§ 3. He proceeds by a long harangue to ſhew, *p.* 34. that "not only theſe material characters in themſelves are corruptible, but in complexion with the cauſes actually laid in the world to preſerve them entire; becauſe either thoſe cauſes are material, and then they are alſo liable to continual alterations; or ſpiritual, that is, the minds of men, and from theſe we may with good reaſon hope for a greater degree of conſtancy than from any other piece of nature:" which, by the way, is a very ſtrange paradox, that the actions of voluntary agents have a greater certainty and conſtancy in them than thoſe of natural agents; of which the fall of angels and men, compared with the continuance of the ſun and ſtars in their firſt ſtate, is a very good evidence.

§ 4. But he adds a caution, *p.* 35. that "they are perfectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable, if due circumſtances be obſerved; that is, if due propoſals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care uſed to attend to ſuch propoſals." But who can warrant, that due propoſals will always be made to men, and due care uſed by them? If theſe be uncertain, where

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is the conſtancy and unerrableneſs he talks ſo much of? So that notwithſtanding the conſtancy of this ſpiritual cauſe, the mind of man, of preſerving ſcriptures entire; yet, in order to this, (as he tells us, *p.* 36.), "ſo many actions are to be done, which are compounded "and made up of an innumerable multitude of ſeveral "particularities to be obſerved, every of which may be "miſtaken apart, each being a diſtinct little action in "its ſingle ſelf; ſuch as is the tranſcribing of a whole "book, conſiſting of ſuch myriads of words, ſingle letters, and tittles or ſtops; and the ſeveral actions of "writing over each of theſe ſo ſhort and curſory, that "it prevents diligence, and exceeds human care, to "keep awake, and apply diſtinct attentions to every of "theſe diſtinct actions." Mr. Ruſhworth much outdoes Mr. S. in theſe minute cavils; for he tells us, (*Dial.* 2. § 7.), that "ſuppoſing an original copy of "Chriſt's words, written by one of the Evangeliſts in "the ſame language, let him have ſet down every word "and ſyllable; yet men converſant in noting the "changes of meanings in words, will tell us, that di"vers accents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the ſpeaker's head or body this or that way, *&c.* "may ſo change the ſenſe of the words, that they will "ſeem quite different in writing from what they were "in ſpeaking." I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been careful to preſerve all theſe circumſtances, and hath delivered down Chriſt's doctrine, with all the right traditionary accents, nods, and geſtures, neceſſary for the underſtanding of it; otherwiſe the omiſſion of theſe may have ſo altered the ſenſe of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at firſt. But to anſwer Mr. S.: We do not pretend to be aſſured that it is naturally impoſſible that the ſcriptures ſhould have been corrupted or changed, but only to be ſufficiently aſſured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good arguments as the nature of the ſubject will bear. But if his reaſon had not been very ſhort and curſory, he might eaſily have reflected that oral tradition is equally liable to all theſe contingencies: for it doth as much "prevent diligence, and exceed human care, to keep a"wake, and apply diſtinct attentions to the diſtinct a-

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" ctions of ſpeaking, as of writing." And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered conſiſts of words, and letters, and accents, and ſtops, as well as a doctrine written; and that the ſeveral actions of ſpeaking are as ſhort and curſory as of writing.

§ 5. 2*dly*, He tells us, *p.* 38. " Scripture, formally " conſidered as to its ſignificativeneſs, is alſo uncer- " tain:" 1. " Becauſe of the uncertainty of the letter," *ibid.* This is already anſwered. 2. " Becauſe the certain " ſenſe of it is not to be arrived to by the vulgar, who " are deſtitute of languages and arts," *ibid.* True, where men are not permitted to have the ſcriptures in their own language, and underſtand no other: but where they are allowed the ſcriptures tranſlated into their own language, they may underſtand them; all neceſſary points of faith and practice being ſufficiently plain in any tranſlation of the Bible that I know of. And that eminent wits cannot agree about the ſenſe of texts which concern the main points of faith, *p.* 38. hath been ſpoken to already.

§ 6. As for the reverence he pretends to ſcripture in the concluſion of his fourth diſcourſe, he might have ſpared that, after all the raillery and rudeneſs he hath uſed againſt it. It is eaſy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expreſſions concerning them, what his eſteem is of thoſe ſacred oracles. Probably it was requiſite in prudence to caſt in a few good words concerning the ſcriptures, for the ſake of the more tender and ſqueamiſh novices of their religion; or (as Mr. Ruſhworth's nephew ſays frankly and openly, *Dial.* 2. § 14.) " for the ſatisfaction of indifferent men, that have " been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of " the ſcripture;" who it ſeems are not yet attained to that degree of Catholick piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently, that the word of God ſhould be reviled or ſlighted. Beſides that in reference to thoſe whom they hope hereafter to convert, (who might be too much alienated from their religion, if he had expreſſed nothing but contempt towards a book which Proteſtants and Chriſtians in all ages, till the very dregs of Popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of), it was not much amiſs to paſs this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wiſe of his own religion will eaſily underſtand, and

and may ſerve to catch the reſt. But let him not deceive himſelf, *God is not mocked.*

SECT. VI. *That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.*

§ 1. SEcondly, He comes to ſhew, *p.* 41. "that the "properties of a rule of faith belong to o-"ral tradition." And, firſt, he gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition; which amounts to this; that as, in reference to the civil education of children, "they are taught their own and "others names, to write and read, and exerciſe their "trades;" ſo, in reference to religion, "the children "of Chriſtians firſt hear ſounds; afterwards, by de-"grees, get dim notions of God, Chriſt, Saviour, hea-"ven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees practiſe what "they have heard: they are ſhewn to ſay grace, and "their prayers, to hold up their hands, or perhaps eyes, "and to kneel, and other poſtures. Afterwards they "are acquainted with the creed, ten commandments, "and ſacraments, ſome common forms of prayer, and "other practices of Chriſtianity; and are directed to "order their lives accordingly; and are guided in all "this by the actions and carriage of the elder faith-"ful. And this goes on by inſenſible degrees, not by "leaps from a hundred years to a hundred, but from "month to month, and even leſs." If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among Proteſtants, and that with greater advantage; becauſe we always teach children to ſay their prayers in a known tongue, ſo as they may underſtand them. And we alſo teach them the creed, and ten commandments, and the ſacraments, ſo many as Chriſt hath inſtituted, and no more. So that if this be ſo infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of Chriſtianity, we have it among us. And we do over and beſides inſtruct them in the ſcriptures, which are the authentick inſtrument whereby Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not ſuppoſe, as his hypotheſis neceſſarily inforceth him to do, that the Chriſtian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by ſome more, by others

others leſs perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and diſpoſitions of children: whereas his hypotheſis falls, if all, or at leaſt the generality of parents do not inſtruct their children with the like exactneſs, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the ſame perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it muſt neceſſarily be ſo conveyed; and theſe variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all parents do teach their children the whole body of Chriſt's doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thouſand ſeveral expreſſions ſignifying the ſame ſenſe; and not have inſtanced in two ſet forms, ſuch as the creed, and ten commandments: for, according to Mr. White, (*Apology*, *p.* 81.), "that cannot be a tradition "which is delivered down in ſet words."

§ 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to ſhew that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already ſhewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two, *viz.* "That it be plain and intelli-"gible; and, That it be ſufficiently certain." The firſt of theſe, That oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him. All the difficulty is about the ſecond property, whether we have ſufficient aſſurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition, hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this diſcourſe is, That if this rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the Chriſtian doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change; that is, if the next age after the Apoſtles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the Chriſtian doctrine to their immediate ſucceſſors, and they to theirs, and ſo on; then, upon this ſuppoſition, the doctrine of the preſent traditionary church muſt be the very ſame with that which was delivered to the Apoſtles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impoſſible there ſhould have been any deviation from it, as he pretends, this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the moſt abſurd propoſitions that ever yet pretended to demonſtrative evidence.

PART

PART III.

In which Mr. S.'s demonſtrations and corollaries are examined.

SECT. I. *Conſiderations touching his demonſtrations in general.*

§ 1. BEfore I come to ſpeak particularly to his demonſtrations, I ſhall premiſe thef two conſiderations: 1. That, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, no man can, by his private reaſon, certainly find out the true rule of faith. 2. That, according to Mr. S. the way of demonſtration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of theſe be made out, his demonſtrations loſe all their force. If the firſt be made good, then he cannot demonſtrate the infallibility of tradition, nor, conſequently, that that is the rule of faith. If the ſecond, then the way of demonſtration, which he pretends to take, ſignifies nothing.

§ 2. 1*ſt*, No man can, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, by his private reaſon, certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppoſe a Heathen to be deſirous to inform himſelf of the Chriſtian faith; in order to which, he is inquiſitive after ſome rule by which he may take a meaſure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he inquires of Chriſtians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it; ſome ſaying, that the ſcripture, others, that oral tradition, is the rule. In this caſe, it is not poſſible, without a revelation, for this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reaſon examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both ſides. And when he hath done this, unleſs he can by his reaſon demonſtrate, that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not ſo, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reaſon can never do this, according to Mr. S. For, ſpeaking of demonſtrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, *p.* 53. that "tradition

" hath for its baſis man's nature; not according to his " intellectuals, which do but darkly grope in the pur- " ſuit of ſcience, *&c.*" And again, ſpeaking how reaſon brings men to the rule of faith, he uſes this compariſon, (*Append.* 2. *p.* 183.), " She is like a dim-ſighted " man, who uſed his reaſon, to find a truſty friend to " lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his gui- " dance rationally, without uſing his own reaſon at all, " about the way itſelf." So that, according to him, the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonſtration, becauſe it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonſtrate. Beſides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonſtrate the certainty of tradition; becauſe that faculty, which is dim-ſighted, and does but grope darkly in the purſuit of ſcience, is uncapable of framing demonſtrations. Nor can any man underſtand how dim-ſighted reaſon ſhould ſee clearly to chuſe its guide any more than its way; eſpecially if it be conſidered, what a pretty contradiction it is, to ſay, that reaſon, as it is dim-ſighted, can ſee clearly.

But Mr. Creſſy is not contented to call every man's reaſon *dim-ſighted;* he ventures a ſtep farther, and calls it *hood-winked* and *blind:* for he tells us, (*Append. c.* 6. § 8.), that " private reaſon is apparently a moſt fallible " guide." And he pities my Lord Falkland's caſe; becauſe, in the ſearch of the true religion, he did " betake " himſelf to the caſual conduct of blind, human, natural " reaſon," (*ibid.* §9.); which afterwards (§ 11.) he calls " a guide that two perſons cannot poſſibly follow toge- " ther; becauſe no two perſons that ever followed any " other guide beſide authority, did or could think all " things to be reaſonable that all others thought ſo; " and, by conſequence, ſuch a guide, that, as long as " he continues in that office, there cannot poſſibly be " any church any where: which (ſays he) is an infal- " lible eviction, that this is an imaginary ſeducing guide; " ſince it is impoſſible, that that ſhould be a guide ap- " pointed for any Chriſtian, which neither Chriſt nor " his Apoſtles, nor any of their followers, ever mention- " ed; yea, which formally deſtroys one of our twelve arti- " cles of the Apoſtles creed, *viz. I believe the Holy Catholick* " *church.*"

" *church.*" Thus he does by reaſon clearly and infallibly evince, that reaſon cannot be otherwiſe than a moſt blind and fallible guide. This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one ſide of them; as if becauſe reaſon has a blind ſide, and is uncertain in ſome things, therefore we ought to conclude her univerſally blind, and uncertain in every thing; and as if becauſe all men cannot think all things reaſonable which any one man thinks to be ſo, therefore it is to be doubted whether thoſe common principles of reaſon be true which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Creſſy ſpeaks here of the uſe of our private reaſon in the finding out of our rule, is clear from what he ſays in the next ſection, *viz.* that " this hood-winked guide (inquiring " into ſcripture, and ſearching after tradition) may poſ- " ſibly ſtumble upon the way to unity and truth; that " is, the true Catholick church." If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend, that he can by reaſon demonſtrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hood-winked guide lead men to the true rule of faith? And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquiſitive philoſopher, who knowing no other guide but his reaſon whereby to find out whether ſcripture or tradition be the rule, to tell him, that, by the help of this hood-winked guide, he might poſſibly ſtumble upon the right?

A man may juſtly ſtand amazed at the inconſiſtency of theſe mens diſcourſes and principles. In one mood they are all for demonſtration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect ſcience, which is the true rule of faith. But then, again, when another fit takes them, there is no ſuch thing as ſcience. Human reaſon grows all on the ſudden dim-ſighted, and at the next word is ſtruck ſtark blind; and then the very utmoſt that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquiſitive perſon to the true rule of faith, is, to leave him in a poſſibility of ſtumbling upon it: but if he be a heretick that makes uſe of private reaſon for his guide, then " it " is impoſſible, but that he with his blind guide ſhould " fall into the pit," (*Append. c.* 7. § 8.). I cannot, for my part, imagine how they can reconcile the blindneſs of human reaſon with all that noiſe which they make about ſcience and demonſtration: but this I muſt

confeſs, that theſe kind of diſcourſes which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Creſſy, are very proper arguments to perſuade a man of the blindneſs of human reaſon. And indeed there is one paſſage in Mr. Creſſy which gives me very great ſatisfaction concerning theſe matters; where he tells us, *ibid.* that "the wit and judgment of Catholicks is, "to renounce their own judgment, and depoſe their own "wit." Now, he that profeſſes to have done this, may write contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that, when he forſook our church, and turned Papiſt, he laid aſide his judgment and wit; which is juſt ſuch an heroick act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery, to ſhew his liberty, ſhould ſell himſelf for a ſlave. I am glad to underſtand, from an experienced perſon, what charges a man muſt be at when he turns Roman Catholick, namely, that whoever will embrace that religion, muſt forfeit his reaſon.

§ 3. *2dly*, The way of demonſtration is, according to Mr. S. no certain way to find out the rule of faith. In his fourth *Appendix* againſt my Lord of Down, *p.* 253. 254. one of the eight mines, as he calls them, which he lays to blow up my Lord's diſſuaſive againſt Popery, is this: "That the method he takes in diſſuading, cannot "be held in reaſon to have power to diſſuade, unleſs it "be proper to that effect; that is, not common to that "effect and a contrary one. Now, that being moſt e-"vidently no method or way to ſuch an effect, which ma-"ny follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect, it is "plain to common ſenſe, that my Lord of Down miſ-"calls his book a diſſuaſive; and that it can have in it "no power of moving the underſtanding one way or o-"ther, unleſs he can firſt vouch ſome particularity in the "method he takes, above what is in others, in which we "experience miſcarriage, *&c.*" If this be true, then his method of demonſtration is no way to make men certain of what he pretends to demonſtrate; becauſe that is "moſt evidently no way to an effect which many fol-"low and take, yet arrive not at that effect;" ſo that "it "is plain to common ſenſe, that Mr. S.'s demonſtrations "can have in them no power of moving the under-"ſtanding one way or other, unleſs he can vouch "ſome

" ſome particularity in the demonſtrations he pretends " to bring, above what is in other pretended demon- " ſtrations, in which we experience miſcarriage." Do not Thomas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells us, *Exetaſis*, p. 24.) all along pretend to demonſtrate? and yet it is generally believed, that, at leaſt where they contradict one another, one of them failed in his demonſtrations. Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have demonſtrated, that a man at one jump might leap from London to Rome? and yet I do not think any one was ever ſatisfied with his demonſtration. And Mr. S. knows one in the world, whom I will not name, becauſe he hath ſince ingenuouſly acknowledged his error, who thought he had demonſtrated the quadrature of the circle; and was ſo confident of it, as to venture the reputation of his demonſtrations in divinity upon it; and ſome of thoſe divinity-demonſtrations were the very ſame with Mr. S.'s. Since therefore the world hath experienced ſo much miſcarriage in the way of demonſtration, before Mr. S.'s demonſtrations can be allowed to ſignify any thing, he muſt, according to his own law, vouch ſome particularity in his way and method of demonſtration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where, that I remember, told us what that particularity is, wherein his way of demonſtration is above other mens: nor can I, upon the moſt diligent ſearch, find any peculiar advantage that his way has more than theirs above mentioned; unleſs this be one, that he pretends to demonſtrate a ſelf-evident principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unleſs this may be counted another advantage, that he has ſo extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonſtrations; and in this particular, I muſt acknowledge, that he clearly excells all that have gone before him. In all other things his way of demonſtration is but like his neighbours.

SECT. II. *Mr. S.'s demonſtration* à priori.

§ 1. I Come now to examine his demonſtrations of this ſelf-evident principle, (as he often calls it), That oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of convey-

ing Chriſt's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to ſay, that it is impoſſible but that this rule ſhould always have been kept to. That this is not a ſelf-evident principle, needs no other evidence, than that he goes about to demonſtrate it. But yet, notwithſtanding this, I think he hath as much reaſon to call this a ſelf-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonſtrations.

§ 2. In order to his demonſtration *à priori*, he lays theſe four grounds, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words, *p.* 59. 60. "1. That Chriſtian doctrine was at "firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the Apoſtles, in the hearts "of the faithful, diſperſed in great multitudes over ſe- "veral parts of the world. 2. That this doctrine was "firmly believed by all thoſe faithful, to be the way to "heaven; and the contradicting or deſerting it, to be "the way to damnation: ſo that the greateſt hopes "and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine "authority, ſtrongly applied to the minds of the firſt "believers, encouraging them to the adhering to that "doctrine, and deterring them from relinquiſhing it; "and indeed infinitely greater than any other what- "ever, ſpringing from any temporal conſideration: "and that this was in all ages the perſuaſion of the "faithful. 3. That hopes of good, and fears of harm, "ſtrongly applied, are the cauſes of actual will. 4. That "the thing was feaſible, or within their power: that "what they were bred to, was knowable by them. This "put, it follows as certainly, that a great number or "body of the firſt believers, and after faithful in each "age, that is, from age to age, would continue to hold "themſelves, and teach their children as themſelves had "been taught, that is, would follow and ſtick to tradi- "tion; as it doth, that a cauſe, put actually cauſing, "produceth its effect." This is his demonſtration, with the grounds of it.

§ 3. To ſhew the vanity and weakneſs of this pretended demonſtration, I ſhall aſſail it theſe three ways; by ſhewing, 1. That if the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible, which common experience evinceth, and himſelf muſt grant to have been. 2. That his main grounds are ap-

parently

parently false. 3. That his demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

SECT. III. *The first answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. IF the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible, which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two principles be true, "That the greatest hopes and fears are strongly applied to "the minds of all Christians," and, "That those hopes "and fears strongly applied, are the cause of actual will "to adhere constantly to Christ's doctrine," then from hence it follows, that none that entertain this doctrine, can ever fall from it; because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it. For supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, those who entertain it, must actually will to adhere to it; because "a "cause put actually causing, produceth its effect;" which is, constant adherence to it. And if this were true, these two things would be impossible: 1. That any Christian should turn apostate or heretick; 2. That any Christian should live wickedly: both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant *de facto* to have been.

§ 2. *First*, It would be impossible that any Christian should turn apostate or heretick. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us, *p.* 60. that "the first renouncers of "tradition must have been true believers, or holders of "it, ere they renounced it;" and I suppose there is the same reason for apostates. But if all Christians or true believers (as he calls them) have these arguments of hope and fear strongly applied, and hope and fear strongly applied be the causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; it is necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either apostates or hereticks. For if these causes be put in "all the faithful "actually causing," (as the grounds of his demonstration suppose), and "indefectibleness be the proper and "necessary effect of those causes," as he also saith, *p.* 75. then

then it is impoſſible, that where theſe cauſes are put, there ſhould be any defection: for a proper and neceſſary effect cannot but be where the cauſes of ſuch an effect are put, eſpecially if they be put actually cauſing; and conſequently it is impoſſible that any ſingle Chriſtian ſhould ever either totally apoſtatize, or fall into hereſy; that is, renounce tradition.

§ 3. And that this is a genuine conſequence from theſe principles, (though he will not acknowledge it here, becauſe he ſaw it would ruin his demonſtration), is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his diſcourſe. For he tells us, *p.* 54. 78. 89. that "it exceeds all the "power of nature, (abſtracting from the cauſes of madneſs, and violent diſeaſe), to blot the knowledge of "this doctrine out of the ſoul of one ſingle believer;" and that "ſince no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and "innovate without knowing he doth ſo, it is a manifeſt "impoſſibility a whole age ſhould fall into an abſurdity "ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man;" and that "it is perhaps impoſſible for one ſingle man to "attempt to deceive poſterity by renouncing tradition." Which paſſages laid together, amount to thus much, that it is impoſſible that tradition ſhould fail in any one ſingle perſon. And though in the paſſage laſt cited he ſpeaks faintly, and with a *perhaps*, as if he apprehended ſome danger in ſpeaking too peremptorily; yet any one would eaſily ſee the laſt to be as impoſſible as any of the reſt. And he himſelf elſewhere, being in the full career of his bombaſt rhetorick, delivers it roundly without fear or wit, *p.* 54. "Sooner may the ſinews of entire nature by "overſtraining crack, and ſhe loſe all her activity and "motion, that is, herſelf, than one ſingle part of that "innumerable multitude, which integrate that vaſt teſtification which we call tradition, can poſſibly be violated."

§ 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and preſs his demonſtration too far, becauſe he tells us he only intends by it to prove, that the generality of Chriſtians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he ſhould then have brought a demonſtration that would have concluded no more;

more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of Chriſtians. A clear evidence that it is no demonſtration, becauſe it concludes that which is evidently falſe, that there can be no apoſtates or hereticks. Beſides, ſuppoſing his demonſtration to conclude only, that the generality of Chriſtians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to hiſtory. St. Hierom tells us, (*Chron. ad annum Chriſt.* 352), that "Liberius, Biſhop of Rome, (for all his particular title to infallibility built upon tradition, as Mr. S. ſpeaks, *corol.* 28.), "turned Arian;" and that "Arianiſm was eſtabliſhed "by the ſynod of Ariminum;" which was a council more general than that of Trent, (*ibid. ad an.* 363); and that "almoſt all the churches in the whole world, "under the names of peace and of the Emperor, were "polluted by communion with the Arians," (*ibid. ad an.* 364). Again, that "under the Emperor Conſtantius (Euſebius and Hippatius being Conſuls) infidelity "was ſubſcribed under the names of unity and faith," (*ibid. adverſ. Luciferi.*); and "that the whole world "groned, and wondered to ſee itſelf turned Arian," (*ibid.*) And he uſes this as an argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the church thoſe who had been defiled with the hereſy of Arius, Becauſe the number of thoſe who had kept themſelves orthodox was exceeding ſmall: "For (ſays he, *ibid.*) the ſynod of Nice, which "conſiſted of above three hundred Biſhops, received "eight Arian Biſhops, whom they might have caſt out "without any great loſs to the church. I wonder, "then, how ſome, and thoſe the followers of the Nicene faith, can think, that three confeſſors (*viz.* Athanaſius, Hilarius, Euſebius) ought not to do that, "in caſe of neceſſity, for the good and ſafety of the "whole world, which ſo many and ſo excellent perſons "did voluntarily." It ſeems Arianiſm had prevailed very far, when St. Hierom could not name above three eminent perſons in the church who had preſerved themſelves untainted with it. Again, "Arius in Alexandria "was at firſt but one ſpark; but, becauſe it was not "preſently extinguiſhed, it broke out into a flame which "devoured the whole world," (*In epiſt. ad Galat. l.* 3.).

Gregory

Gregory Nazianzen (*Orat.* 20. & 21.) likewiſe tells us to the ſame purpoſe, that "the Arian hereſy ſeized "upon the greateſt part of the church." And, to ſhew that he knew nothing of Mr. S.'s demonſtration of the indefectibility of the generality of Chriſtians, he aſks, (*Orat* 25.), "Where are thoſe that define the church "by multitude, and deſpiſe the little flock? *&c.*" And this hereſy was of a long continuance; for from its riſe, which happened in the 20th year of Conſtantine, it continued, as Joh. Abbas (*Chron. ad annum octavum Maurit.*) hath calculated it, 266 years. And the Pelagian hereſy, if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great champions of the church againſt it, did in a manner prevail as much as Arianiſm; as the ſaid author complains, in his preface to his book, *Cauſa Dei*, that "al-"moſt the whole world was run after Pelagius into "error." Will Mr. S. now ſay, that, in the height of theſe hereſies, "the generality of Chriſtians did firmly "adhere to tradition?" If he ſay they did, let him anſwer the expreſs teſtimonies produced to the contrary: but if they did not, then his demonſtration alſo fails as to the generality of Chriſtians. And if the greater part of Chriſtians may fall off from tradition, what demonſtration can make it impoſſible for the leſſer to do ſo? Who will ſay it is in reaſon impoſſible, that a thouſand perſons ſhould relinquiſh tradition, though nine hundred of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwiſe ſecured from doing ſo, than thoſe were who have actually relinquiſhed it? Now, is not this a clear evidence, that this which he calls a demonſtration *à priori* is no ſuch thing? becauſe every demonſtration *à priori* muſt be from cauſes which are neceſſary; whereas his demonſtration is from voluntary cauſes. So that unleſs he can prove, that voluntary cauſes are neceſſary, he ſhall never demonſtrate, that it is impoſſible for the generality of any company of men to err, who have every one of them free will, and are every one of them liable to paſſion and miſtake.

§ 5. From all this it appears, that his whole diſcourſe about the original and progreſs of hereſy, and the multitudes of hereticks in ſeveral ages, is as clear a confutation of his own demonſtration as can be deſired. The only

only thing that he offers in that diſcourſe to prevent this objection which he foreſaw it liable to, is this: "It "is not (ſays he, *p.* 65.) to be expected, but that ſome "contingencies ſhould have place, where a whole ſpe- "cies in a manner is to be wrought upon. It ſufficeth, "that the cauſes to preſerve faith indeficiently entire, "are as efficacious as thoſe which are laid for the pre- "ſervation of mankind; the virtue of faith not being to "continue longer than mankind, its only ſubject, does. "And they will eaſily appear as efficacious as the o- "ther, if we conſider the ſtrength of thoſe cauſes be- "fore explicated, and reflect, that they are effectively "powerful to make multitudes daily debar themſelves "of thoſe pleaſures which are the cauſes of mankind's "propagation: and, if we look into hiſtory for expe- "rience of what hath paſſed in the world ſince the pro- "pagating of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find more particu- "culars failing in propagating their kind than their "faith." To which I anſwer,

1*ſt*, That it may reaſonably be expected there ſhould be no contingencies in any particulars where cauſes of actual will are ſuppoſed to be put in all; "becauſe (as he "ſays truly) a cauſe put actually cauſing, cannot but pro- "duce its effect." Suppoſe, then, conſtant cauſes laid in all mankind of an actual will to ſpeak truth, to the beſt of their knowledge, were it not reaſonable to expect, that there would be no ſuch contingency to the world's end, as that any man ſhould tell a lie? Nay, it were madneſs for any man to think any ſuch contingency ſhould be, ſuppoſing cauſes actually cauſing men always to ſpeak truth.

2*dly*, It is far from truth, "that the cauſes to preſerve "faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as thoſe "which are laid for the propagation of mankind." And whereas he would prove the ſtrength of thoſe cauſes which are laid to preſerve faith, becauſe they are "effe- "ctively powerful to make multitudes daily debar them- "ſelves of thoſe pleaſures which are the cauſes of man- "kind's propagation;" I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own hiſtorians, and others of the beſt and moſt credible of their own writers, of more than one age, concerning the

the general vitiouſneſs and debauchery of their prieſts and monks, will be over-forward to believe, that all thoſe who debar themſelves of lawful marriage, do abſtain from thoſe unlawful pleaſures.

§ 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, that "if we look into hiſtories for experience of "what hath paſſed in the world ſince the firſt planting "of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find far more particulars failing "in propagating their kind than their faith." Do any hiſtories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greateſt part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But hiſtories do confirm, that the far greateſt part of the Chriſtian world did fall off to Arianiſm and Pelagianiſm; and conſequently, as he ſuppoſeth, did deſert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vaſt territories of the world either wholly, or for the far greateſt part of them, take up an humour againſt propagating mankind? and yet both hiſtory, and the experience of the preſent age, aſſures us, that a great part of Aſia and of Africk, where the moſt flouriſhing churches in the world once were, are fallen off from Chriſtianity, and become either Mahometans or Heathens. In Africk almoſt all thoſe vaſt regions which Chriſtianity had gained from Heatheniſm, Mahometaniſm hath regained from Chriſtianity. All the North part of Africk, lying along the Mediterranean, where Chriſtianity flouriſhed once as much as ever it did at Rome, is at this time utterly void of Chriſtians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And, not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had, as is thought, from the Apoſtles time profeſſed the Chriſtian faith, hath, within theſe 150 years, for want of miniſters, (as Alvarez, *Hiſt. Æthiop.* tells us), quitted Chriſtianity; and is partly revolted to Heatheniſm, partly fallen off to Mahometaniſm. So that it ſeems, that, notwithſtanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition may fail in a largely extended church. As for Aſia, in the Eaſterly parts of it, there is not now one Chriſtian to four of what there were 500 years ago: and, in the more Southerly parts of it, where Chriſtianity had taken the deepeſt root, the Chriſtians are far inferior in number to the idolaters

idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decreaſe. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have thoſe Chriſtian nations which are turned Mahometans and Pagans, failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear inſtances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

§ 7. But beſides thoſe who have totally apoſtatized from Chriſtianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the Jacobites and Neſtorians, and all thoſe other ſects which agree with and depend upon theſe, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I ſay, have not all theſe renounced tradition for ſeveral ages? And here, in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germanies, France, and Switzerland; have not the kingdoms of Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and a conſiderable part of Ireland, in Mr. S.'s opinion, deſerted tradition? If I ſhould once ſee a whole nation fail, becauſe no body would marry, and contribute to the propagating of mankind, and ſhould find this ſullen humour to prevail in ſeveral nations, and to overſpread vaſt parts of the world, I ſhould then in good earneſt think it poſſible for mankind to fail; unleſs I could ſhew it impoſſible for other nations to do that which I ſee ſome to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever cauſe he aſſigns of hereſy, as pride, ambition, luſt, (*p.* 67.), or any other vice or intereſt, if theſe can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, then where is the "efficacy of the cauſes to pre- "ſerve faith indeficiently entire in any?" for the demonſtration holds as ſtrongly for all Chriſtians as for any.

§ 8. *Secondly*, From theſe grounds it would follow, that no Chriſtian can live wickedly; becauſe the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear muſt in all reaſon be as powerful and efficacious cauſes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonſtration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reaſoning: for he argues in this manner, *p.* 62. "Good is the proper object of the will. "Good propoſed makes the will to deſire that good, and "conſequently the known means to obtain it. Now, "infinite goods and harms ſufficiently propoſed, are of "their own nature incomparably more powerful cauſes

" to carry the will, than temporal ones. Since, then, " when two cauſes are counterpoiſed, the leſſer, when " it comes to execution, is no cauſe as to the ſubſi- " ſtence of that effect; it follows, that there is no cauſe " to move the wills of a world of believers to be willing " to do that which they judge would loſe themſelves " and their poſterity infinite goods, and bring them in- " finite harms, *&c.* in caſe a ſufficient propoſal or appli- " cation be not wanting:" which he tells us, *p.* 65. is not wanting; becauſe " Chriſtianity urged to execution, " gives its followers a new life and a new nature; than " which a nearer application cannot be imagined." Doth not this argument extend to the lives of Chriſtians as well as their belief? So that we may as well infer from theſe grounds, that it is impoſſible that thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity ſhould live contrary to it, as that they ſhould fail to deliver down the doctrine of Chriſt; becauſe whatever can be an inducement and temptation to any man to contradict this doctrine by his practice, may equally prevail upon him to falſify it. For why ſhould men make any more ſcruple of damning themſelves and their poſterity, by teaching them falſe doctrines, than by living wicked lives? which are equally pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only upon account of the bad influence which ſuch examples of fathers and teachers are like to have upon their ſcholars; but likewiſe they are one of the ſtrongeſt arguments in the world to perſuade them, that their teachers do not themſelves believe that religion which they teach; for, if they did, they would live according to it. Why ſhould any man think, that thoſe arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of Chriſtians to make them live holy lives, ſhould be ſo neceſſarily efficacious to make them ſo much concerned for the preſerving of a right belief? Nay, we have great reaſon to believe, that ſuch perſons will endeavour, as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to their lives. And this is the true ſource of thoſe innovations in faith for which we challenge the church of Rome; which any man may eaſily diſcern, who will but conſider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a ſecular intereſt, and the gratifying of that inordinate appetite after

ter, riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church.

SECT. IV. *The second answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. SEcondly, The main grounds of his demonstration are apparently false. For,

1*st*, This demonstration supposeth, that the generality of Christian parents, in all ages, perfectly understood the doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembered it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their children in it: which is as contrary to experience, as that the generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this doctrine, and every substantial part of it, was received and remembered by the generality of children as it was taught, and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake. So he tells us, *p* 53. that "the substance of faith comes "clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stu- "pid man living cannot possibly be ignorant of it." But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined, not only from every man's own experience of the world, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our Saviour? and yet his disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it: so that, in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this doctrine from himself, with an infallible spirit, by which they might be led into all truth, and secured from error and mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this doctrine. The Apostles, who taught the world by an infallible spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary parents can teach their children; yet in all the churches which they planted, they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their epistles. Nay, the Apostle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews with such a degree of dulness and stupidity, that after sitting

time and means of inſtruction, they were ſtill ignorant of the very principles of Chriſtianity. So he tells them, chap. v. 11. 12. that *when for the time they ought to be teachers of others, they had need that one ſhould teach them again which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God.* And St. Hierom *(adverſ. Lucifer.)* tells us, that "the pri-"mitive churches were tainted with many groſs errors, "whilſt the Apoſtles were alive, and the blood of "Chriſt yet warm in Judea." But it may be there have been better teachers ſince, and children are more apt to learn now than men were then. Who knows how the world may be changed?

§ 2. *2dly*, This demonſtration ſuppoſeth the hopes and fears which Chriſtian religion applies to mens minds, to be certain and neceſſary cauſes of actual will in men, to adhere to the doctrine of Chriſt; and conſequently, that they muſt neceſſarily adhere to it. That he ſuppoſeth them to be neceſſary, I have his own word for it; for he tells us, *p.* 75. that "he hath endeavoured to "demonſtrate the indefectibleneſs of tradition, as the "proper and neceſſary effect of thoſe cauſes which pre-"ſerve and continue tradition on foot;" and what thoſe cauſes are, he told us before, *p.* 60. that "they "are hopes and fears ſtrongly applied." But I hope, that the indefectibleneſs of tradition cannot be a neceſſary effect of the ſtrong application of thoſe hopes and fears, unleſs thoſe hopes and fears be a neceſſary cauſe of that effect. And indeed this is ſufficiently implied in his ſaying, that "they are the cauſes of actual will in Chri-"ſtians to adhere to tradition." For if theſe cauſes of actual will be conſtant, (as he muſt ſuppoſe), then they are certain, and neceſſary, and infallible cauſes of adhering to this doctrine: for whatever is in act, is neceſſary while it is ſo; and if it be conſtantly in act, the effect is always neceſſary. But what a wild ſuppoſition is this, that moral motives and arguments working upon a free principle, the will of man, do neceſſarily produce their effect? Is it neceſſary, that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell ſhould keep Chriſtians conſtant to the doctrine of Chriſt? and is it not as neceſſary, that theſe arguments ſhould prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonſtrate,

ſtrate, that all men muſt be good, who have ſufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reaſon impoſſible, that moral arguments ſhould be of a neceſſary and infallible efficacy; becauſe they are always propounded to a free agent, who may chuſe whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reaſonable, that men ſhould yield to them; and if they be reaſonable, they will: but ſo long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by theſe arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man, to entertain the Chriſtian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this neceſſarily; that is, whether he will or no; and can no more chuſe whether he will do ſo or not, than whether he will ſee the light when the ſun ſhines upon his open eyes, or whether he will hear a ſound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears; or (to uſe Mr. S.'s own ſimilitudes, *p.* 53.) whether he will "feel heat, cold, pain, pleaſure, "or any other material quality that affects his ſenſes?" We ſee then how unreaſonable his ſuppoſitions are; and yet, without theſe grounds, his demonſtration falls: for, if it be poſſible that Chriſtians may miſtake or forget the doctrine of Chriſt, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to inſtruct others in it; or if it be poſſible that the will of man, which is free, may not be neceſſarily and infallibly ſwayed by the arguments of hope and fear; then it is poſſible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonſtration, which ſupports itſelf upon ſuch principles, as do directly affront the conſtant experience and the cleareſt reaſon of mankind?

§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice, how inconſiſtent he is to himſelf in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, *p.* 53. that "tradition hath for its baſis the beſt na-"ture in the univerſe, that is, man's; not according "to his moral part, defectible by reaſon of original "corruption; nor yet his intellectuals, darkly groping "in the purſuit of ſcience, *&c.*; but according to "thoſe faculties in him, perfectly and neceſſarily ſub-"ject to the operations and ſtrokes of nature, that is,

" his eyes, ears, handling, and the direct impreſſion of " knowledge, as naturally and neceſſarily iſſuing from " the affecting thoſe ſenſes, as it is to feel heat, cold, " pain, pleaſure, or any other material quality." So that, according to this diſcourſe, the baſis of tradition is not man's nature conſidered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflexion; for in this conſideration, it is dark and defectible: but man's nature, conſidered only as capable of direct ſenſitive knowledge, as acting naturally and neceſſarily: which is to ſay, that tradition is founded in the nature of man, conſidered not as a man, but a brute; under which conſideration, I ſee no reaſon why he ſhould call it the beſt nature in the univerſe. But now, how will he reconcile this diſcourſe with the grounds of his demonſtration, where he tells us, that the ſtability of tradition is founded in the arguments of hope and fear; the objects of which being future and at a diſtance, cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impreſſions upon his ſenſes, but muſt work upon him by way of intellectual reflexion and conſideration? For I hope he will not deny, but that the arguments of hope and fear work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, elſe how are they arguments? And if man, according to his moral part, be (as he ſays) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in thoſe arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purpoſely all along, both for the reader's eaſe and mine own, neglected to take notice of ſeveral of his inconſiſtencies; but theſe are ſuch clear and tranſparent contradictions, that I could do no leſs than make an example of them.

SECT. V. *The third anſwer to his demonſtration.*

§ 1. THirdly, This demonſtration is confuted by clear and undeniable inſtances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

1*ſt*, The tradition of the one true God, which was the eaſieſt to be preſerved of any doctrine in the world, being ſhort and plain, planted in every man's nature, and perfectly ſuited to the reaſon of mankind. And yet this

this tradition, not having paſſed through many hands, by reaſon of the long age of man, was ſo defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapſe into polytheiſm and idolatry. Now, a man that were ſo hardy as to demonſtrate againſt matter of fact, might, by a ſtronger demonſtration than Mr. S.'s, prove, that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impoſſible it ſhould fail: as Zeno demonſtrated the impoſſibility of motion, againſt Diogenes walking before his eyes. For the doctrine of the one true God "was ſettled in the "heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be the "way to happineſs; and the contradicting or deſerting "of this, to be the way to miſery." And this doctrine was by him ſo taught to his children; who were "encouraged by theſe motives, to adhere to this do-"ctrine, and to propagate it to their children, and "were deterred by them from relinquiſhing it. And "this was in all ages the perſuaſion of the faithful." Now, the "hopes of happineſs, and the fears of mi-"ſery, ſtrongly applied, are the cauſes of actual will. "Beſides, the thing was feaſible, or within their power; "that is, what they were bred to, was knowable by "them;" and that much more eaſily than any other doctrine whatſoever, being ſhort, and plain, and natural. "This put, it follows as certainly, that a great num-"ber in each age would continue to hold themſelves, "and teach their children as themſelves had been "taught, that is, would follow and ſtick to this tra-"dition of the one true God, as it doth, that a cauſe "put actually cauſing, produceth its effect. Actually, "I ſay; for ſince the cauſe is put, and the patient diſ-"poſed, it follows inevitably, that the cauſe is put "ſtill actually cauſing." This demonſtration, which concludes an apparent falſhood, hath the whole ſtrength of Mr. S.'s, and ſeveral advantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by this tradition, is the moſt important, being the firſt principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preſerving it much greater, than of the Chriſtian doctrine, for the cauſes before mentioned: and yet, after all, it ſignifies nothing againſt certain experience, and unqueſtionable matter of fact; only it ſufficiently ſhews the vanity of

Mr.

Mr. S.'s pretended demonſtration, built upon the ſame or weaker grounds.

§ 2. *2dly*, The other inſtance ſhall be in the Greek church, who received the Chriſtian doctrine as entire from the Apoſtles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to poſterity, and the ſame "fears and "hopes ſtrongly applied, to be the actual cauſes of "will;" in a word, all the ſame arguments and cauſes to preſerve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had: and yet, to the utter confuſion of Mr. S.'s demonſtration, tradition hath failed among them. For, as ſpeculators, they deny the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt from the Son; and, as teſtifiers, they diſown any ſuch doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church, by the Apoſtles, as the doctrine of Chriſt.

§ 3. To this inſtance of the Greek church, becauſe Mr. White hath offered ſomething by way of anſwer, I ſhall here conſider it. He tells us, (*Apology for tradition, p.* 51.), that "the plea of the Greek church is non-"tradition; alledging only this, that their fathers did "not deliver the doctrine of the proceſſion of the Holy "Ghoſt; not that they ſay the contrary: which clear-"ly demonſtrates there are no oppoſite traditions be-"tween them and us." But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonſtrate there were no oppoſite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to ſecure his main demonſtration of the impoſſibility of tradition's failing, againſt this inſtance. For that the Greeks have no ſuch tradition as this, "that the "Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Son," is as good evidence of the failure of tradition, as if they had a poſitive tradition, "that he proceeds only from the Father;" eſpecially if we conſider, that they (*Phoc. ep.* 7.) charge the Latin church with innovation in this matter; and ſay, that the addition of that clauſe, "of the proceſſion "from the Son alſo," is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a deviliſh invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle ſo material an objection, and I fear his own conſcience likewiſe, by a pitiful evaſion, inſtead of a ſolid anſwer? What though there be no oppoſite traditions between the Greek and Latin church? yet

yet if their faith be oppoſite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath ſo very well confuted the infallibility of Popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, ſhould not, by the ſame light of reaſon, diſcover the fondneſs of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater abſurdities in it than that which he confutes. And, to ſhew Mr. White the abſurdity of it, I will apply his demonſtration of the infallibility of Chriſtian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will ſee, that it does as ſtrongly prove the impoſſibility of tradition's failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman Catholick, as they are pleaſed to call it. His demonſtration is this: (*De fid. & theolog. tract* 1. § 4.) "Chriſt commanded "his Apoſtles to preach to all the world; and leſt any "one ſhould doubt of the effect, he ſent his Spirit into "them, to bring to their remembrance what he had "taught them; which Spirit did not only give them a "power to do what he inclined them to, but did cauſe "them actually to do it." I cannot but take notice by the way of the ill conſequence of this; which is, that men may doubt whether thoſe who are to teach the doctrine of Chriſt will remember it, and teach it to others, unleſs they have that extraordinary and efficacious aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, which the Apoſtles had. If this be true, his demonſtration is at an end; for he cannot plead that this aſſiſtance hath been continued ever ſince the Apoſtles. He proceeds, "The Apoſtles preached this doctrine; "the nations underſtood it, lived according to it, and "valued it as that which was neceſſary to them and "their poſterity incomparably beyond any thing "elſe." All this I ſuppoſe done to and by the Greeks, as well as any other nation. "Theſe things being put, "it cannot enter into any man's underſtanding, but "that the Chriſtian [Greeks] of the firſt age, being the "ſcholars of the Apoſtles, could and would earneſtly "commend the Chriſtian doctrine to their poſterity; if "ſo, it is evident that they did. So that the continu-"ance of purity of the faith in the [Greek] church, is "founded upon this, that fathers always delivered the "ſame

" ſame doctrine to their children which they had receiv-
" ved from their fathers, and did believe it under this
" very notion and title as received. Nor could any one
" [of that church] deliver another doctrine under this
" title, but he would be convinced of a lie by the reſt:
" and if the whole [Greek] church ſhould endeavour to
" deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and there is
" the ſame reaſon if they ſhould leave out any article of
" the old doctrine], that whole age would be in their
" conſciences condemned of perfidiouſneſs and parricide.
" Now, this is as impoſſible, as it is that all mankind
" ſhould conſpire to kill themſelves." And he after-
wards (*ibid.* § 5.) gives the reaſon why it is ſo impoſſible that tradition ſhould fail, and it is a very bold and ſaucy one, that "if the tradition of the Chriſtian faith be not more " firm, than the courſe of the ſun and moon, and the " propagation of mankind, then God hath ſhewn him-" ſelf an unſkilful artificer." What is there in all this demonſtration which may not be accommodated to the Greek church with as much force and advantage as to the Catholick? unleſs he can ſhew, that it is very poſſible that all the men in Greece may conſpire to kill themſelves, but yet abſolutely impoſſible that all the men in the world ſhould do ſo; which I am ſure he cannot ſhew, unleſs he can demonſtrate, that though it be poſſible for a million of as wiſe men as any are to be found in the world together, to conſpire to do a fooliſh action, yet it is impoſſible that a hundred millions, not one jot wiſer than the other, ſhould agree together to the doing of it.

§ 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White's anſwer to this objection doth not ſignify any thing to his purpoſe. For if the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt was part of Chriſt's doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apoſtles to the Greek church; if ſo, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age, and that to the next, and ſo on; but it ſeems they have failed. Where then is "the force of hopes and fears ſtrongly applied?" Where are "the certain cauſes of actual will to adhere " to this doctrine?" Why is not the effect produced, " the cauſes being put actually cauſing?" If the Apoſtles delivered this doctrine, oral tradition is ſo clear and unmiſtakeable,

unmiſtakeable, and "brings down faith clad in ſuch "plain matters of fact, that the moſt ſtupid man living "(much leſs the Greeks, that were the flower of man-"kind) could not poſſibly be ignorant of it," *p.* 53. 54.; nay "it exceeds all the power of nature, to blot know-"ledge, thus fixed, out of the ſoul of one ſingle belie-"ver," *ibid.* [much more out of ſo vaſt a church]. And "ſince no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or "doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate with-"out knowing he did ſo, it is a manifeſt impoſſibility a "whole church ſhould in any age fall into an abſurdity "ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man," *p.* 78. And ſince "it is natural for every man to ſpeak "truth, and grace is to perfect nature in whatever is "good in it, it follows, that one truly Chriſtian heart "is far more fixed to veracity, than others not imbued "with thoſe heavenly tenets; and conſequently that a "multitude of ſuch muſt incomparably exceed, in point "of teſtifying, the ſame number of others unfortified by "Chriſt's doctrine," *p.* 86. And ſince "ſuch a thought "cannot enter into the moſt depraved nature, as to "harm another without any good to himſelf; and yet "this muſt be, if we put Chriſtian fathers miſteaching "their children unreceived doctrines for received, [and I "hope, for the ſame reaſon, received doctrines for un-"received], contrary to their knowledge. For ſuppo-"ſing ſanctity in the [Greek] church, [and why may "not we as well as in the Latin], that is, that multi-"tudes in it make heaven their firſt love, and look on "ſpiritual goods as their main concern, *&c.* it follows, "that had the fathers [of that church], in any age, "conſented to miſlead their poſterity from what them-"ſelves [not only] conceited [but knew] to be true, "they ſhould do the moſt extreme harm imaginable to "others, without any the leaſt good to themſelves; "which is perhaps impoſſible in one ſingle man, more "in few, but infinitely in a multitude, eſpecially of "good men," *p.* 89.

§ 5. Thus I might apply the reſt of his ranting rhetorick (but that I am weary of tranſcribing it) concerning "the natural love of parents to their children," *p.* 90. 91. (unleſs we ſuppoſe the Greek church deſtitute of it), which muſt

must needs engage them to use the means proper to bring them to heaven, and save them from hell: as also concerning "the natural care men have of not losing their "credit, by telling pernicious lies." And, not to omit the best part of his demonstration, *p.* 93. (which was therefore prudently reserved to the last place), I might likewise shew, how the principles of each science, arithmetick, geometry, logick, nature, morality, historical prudence, politicks, metaphysicks, divinity, and, last of all, the new science of controversy, (as he calls it), or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disputing, (the first principle whereof, he tells us, is, "That tradition is "certain),"" do all contribute to shew the certainty of tradition; that is, the impossibility that any part of Christ's doctrine should fail in the Greek church, any more than in the Latin. And surely arithmetick, geometry, logick, natural philosophy, metaphysicks, *&c.* will all stand up for the Greek church in this quarrel; for considering that Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were born and bred, it is not to be imagined, that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their country.

§ 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to oral tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the Apostles, thought fit to share scripture and tradition between these two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great blessing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the seat of infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnished with this infallible way of conveying the Christian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the scriptures of the New Testament were left in Greek, so oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some shew of reason. Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as these into lusty demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this instance of the Greek church. Otherwise (for ought I see) this instance will hold good against him: and

and whatever he can say for the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be said of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the Apostles preached the same doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet, notwithstanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now assign the age wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and shew how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered, without any such conspiracy; and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would intreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions, (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies), How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? and, In what age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of Christ, (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the Apostles); and also to shew, from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of Christ down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of Christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call *demonstrations* better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to the honest old *Mumpsimus*, of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost: or (to make the business short, and stop

all gaps with one buſh) come over to the Jeſuits, and acknowledge the Pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile themſelves to him, and prevent that direful ſtroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church. And thus I have done with his firſt demonſtration; and I take it for a good ſign that the Popiſh cauſe is at a very low ebb, when ſuch ſtuff as this muſt be called demonſtration.

SECT. VI. *Mr. S.'s demonſtration* à poſteriori.

§ 1. I Come now to his demonſtration *à poſteriori*; which although it fall of itſelf if the demonſtration *à priori* fail, yet becauſe it hath ſome peculiar abſurdities of its own, I ſhall conſider it by itſelf, as well as with relation to the other.

§ 2. Before he comes to lay it down, with the grounds of it, according to his uſual faſhion, he premiſeth ſomething as yielded by Proteſtants, which, in his ſenſe, no Proteſtant ever granted. Juſt ſo he dealt with us before concerning the ſcriptures, ſaying, that by them the Proteſtants "muſt mean unſenſed letters and characters." But let us ſee what it is, *p.* 76. That "this demonſtration *à poſteriori* ſeems a needleſs endeavour againſt the "Proteſtants, who yield, that thoſe points in which we "agree, as the Trinity, incarnation, *&c.* came down "by this way of tradition; and this (he ſaith) no Pro"teſtant ever denied." And then he aſks, "Whether "the ſame virtue of tradition would not have been as "powerful to bring down other points in which we do "not agree, had any ſuch been?" Now, if he ſpeak any thing to his own purpoſe, he muſt ſuppoſe Proteſtants to yield, that all thoſe points wherein we are agreed were conveyed down to us ſolely by oral tradition without writing: but this all Proteſtants deny. So that that only which would avail his cauſe againſt us, is, to ſhew, that thoſe points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by oral teaching, but that they are likewiſe contained in ſcripture, without which, we ſay, we can have no ſufficient certainty and aſſurance at this diſtance,

diſtance, that they were the doctrine of Chriſt, and that they were not either totally innovated, or elſe corrupted in the conveyance from what they were at firſt. And if he can ſhew this concerning any point in difference, I promiſe to yield it to him.

§ 3. I come now to his demonſtration, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words, with the principles upon which it relies, *p.* 77. 78. "The effect then we will pitch upon, "and avow to be the proper one of ſuch a cauſe, is, the "preſent perſuaſion of traditionary Chriſtians, (or Ca- "tholicks), that their faith hath deſcended from Chriſt "and his Apoſtles uninterruptedly, which we find moſt "firmly rooted in their heart; and the exiſtence of this "perſuaſion we affirm to be impoſſible, without the ex- "iſtence of tradition's ever indeficiency to beget it. "To prove this, I lay this firſt principle, That age "which holds her faith thus delivered from the Apoſtles, "neither can itſelf have changed any thing in it, nor "know or doubt that any age ſince the Apoſtles had "changed or innovated therein. The ſecond principle "ſhall be this: No age could innovate any thing, and "withal deliver that very thing to poſterity as received "from Chriſt by continual ſucceſſion." The ſum of which is this, That becauſe a preſent multitude of Chriſtians (*viz.* the Roman church) are perſuaded, that Chriſt's doctrine hath deſcended to them ſolely by an uninterrupted oral tradition; therefore this perſuaſion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cauſe, but the indeficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the preſent age, nor any age before, could make any change or innovation, then the perſuaſion of the preſent age is a plain demonſtration, that this doctrine was always the ſame, and conſequently that tradition cannot fail.

§ 4. In anſwer to this, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe four things.

1. That theſe principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonſtration *à priori*.

2. That theſe principles are not ſufficiently proved by him.

3. That doctrines and practices, which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

take like wild-fire; especially if, by some one or more who bore sway in the church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And although Mr. Rushworth says, (*Dial.* 3. § 7.), "it is impossible "that the authority of one man should sway so much in "the world; because (says he) surely the devil himself "would rather help the church, than permit so little "pride among men;" yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: for though he delivers it confidently, and with a *surely*; yet I make some doubt, whether the devil would be so forward to help the church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think, that he would rather chuse to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than cross a design so dear to him, by unseasonable temptations to pride. So that, notwithstanding Mr. Rushworth's reason, it seems very likely that such a doctrine, in such an age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great persons in the church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive temper of superstitious ignorance, than to entertain such a doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make objections against it, as if this doctrine were new, and full of contradictions, they may easily be borne down by the stream, and by the eminency, and authority, and pretended sanctity of those who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as hereticks, then it is seasonable to maintain, that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then, as they do in effect now, that contradictions ought to be no scruple in the way of faith; that the more impossible any thing is, it is the fitter to be believed; that it is not praiseworthy to believe plain possibilities; but, this is the gallantry and heroical power of faith, this is the way to oblige God almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and downright

downright contradictions: for "God requires at the "people's hands (as Mr. Rushworth tells us, *Dial.* 1. "§ 4.) a credulity of things above and beyond nature; "nay, beyond all the fables, be it spoken with respect, "that ever man invented." After this doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and, by the most inhumane severities and cruelties, suppressed dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new word *transubstantiation* may pretend also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by Christians in all ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the doctrine of the sacrament, as a term of art appendent to it. And when a superstitious church, and designing governors, have once gained this post, and by means of this enormous article of transubstantiation, have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any error, though ever so gross and senseless; then innovations come in amain, and by shoals; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for that very reason the more proper matter for an article of faith. And if any of these innovations be objected against, as contrary to former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith, and believing another contradiction, that though they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§ 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to history and experience. For that the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed them till the reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all histories; and even by those writers that have been the greatest pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age soever there are a great company of superstitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make use of this easy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now, that this was the state of those ages of the church, will be evident to any from these testimonies. Platina (*in vit. Romani, Papæ* 117. *a. C.* 900) writes of Pope Romanus, that he nulled the acts of his predecessor Stephanus: "for (says he) these "Popes minded nothing else but how they might ex-

"tinguish

" tinguiſh both the name and dignity of their predeceſ-
" ſors." And if ſo, who can doubt, but that theſe Popes who made it their buſineſs to deſtroy the very memory of their anceſtors, would be very little careful to preſerve the doctrine of forefathers. But what the care of thoſe times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius ſays, (*in Platin.*), by way of confutation of that paſſage in Platina, concerning Pope Joan's reading publickly at Rome, at her firſt coming thither. " This (ſays he) is utterly falſe; for there was " nothing that they were leſs ſolicitous about in thoſe " times, than to furniſh the city with any publick teach-
" ers." And the time which Onuphrius ſpeaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Burgomenſis ſays, (*anno* 906) " It happened in that age, " through the ſlothfulneſs of men, that there was a ge-
" neral decay of virtue both in the head and members." Again, (*anno* 908), " Theſe times, through the ambiti-
" on and cruel tyranny of the Popes, were extremely " unhappy: for the Popes ſetting aſide the fear of God, " and his worſhip, fell into ſuch enmities among them-
" ſelves as cruel tyrants exerciſe towards one another." Sabellicus ſays, (*Enuead.* 9. *l.* 1. *anno* 900), " It is won-
" derful to obſerve what a ſtrange forgetfulneſs of all " arts did about this time ſeize upon men; inſomuch " that neither the Popes, nor other princes, ſeemed to " have any ſenſe or apprehenſion of any thing that might " be uſeful to human life. There were no wholſome " laws, no reparations of churches, no purſuit of liberal " arts; but a kind of ſtupidity and madneſs, and for-
" getfulneſs of manners, had poſſeſſed the minds of " men." And a little after: " I cannot (ſays he) but " much wonder from whence theſe tragical examples of " Popes ſhould ſpring; and how their minds ſhould " come to be ſo devoid of all piety, as neither to regard " the perſon which they ſuſtained, nor the place they " were in." Sigonius, (*De regn. Ital. l.* 6.), ſpeaking of theſe times, about the beginning of the tenth century, calls them " the foulеſt and blackeſt, both in reſpect " of the wickedneſs of princes, and the madneſs of the " people, that are to be found in all antiquity." Genebrard (*Chron. l.* 4.) ſpeaking of the ſame time: " This

" (ſays

" (says he) is called the unhappy age; being destitute " of men eminent for wit and learning, as also of fa- " mous princes and Popes. In this time there was " scarce any thing done worthy to be remembered by " posterity." And he adds afterwards, " But chiefly " unhappy in this one thing, that, for almost an hun- " dred and fifty years together, about fifty Popes did " utterly degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors." He should have added farther, but even to a miracle happy in another respect, that, during this long and total degeneracy from the piety and virtue of their ancestors, they did not in the least swerve from them in matter of faith and doctrine: a thing incredible, were there not demonstration for it. Werner (*Fascic. tempor.*) gives this character of that time: " About the year of " our Lord one thousand, there began an effeminate " time, in which the Christian faith began to degene- " rate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vi- " gour; insomuch that, in many countries of Christen- " dom, neither sacraments nor ecclesiastical rites were " observed:—and people were given to soothsaying and " witchcraft; and the priest was like the people." It seems, by this testimony, that tradition did faulter a little in that age; else the Christian faith could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much; and, which threatens Mr. S.'s demonstration most of all, that the practical tradition of sacraments, and other ecclesiastical observances, did fail in many Christian countries. Gerbert, who lived in that time, gives this short character of the Roman church, in an epistle of his (*ep.* 40.) to Stephen, Deacon of that church, " The world stands " amazed at the manners of Rome." But most full is the complaint of a great prelate of the church concerning those times: " In the West, (says he, *Bell. Sacr.* " *l.* 1. *c.* 8.), and almost all the world over, especially " among those who were called *the faithful*, faith failed, " and there was no fear of God among them." It seems the argument of fear had lost its force. " Justice was " perished from among men; and violence prevailing " against equity, governed the nations. Fraud, deceit, " and the arts of cozenage, were grown universal. All " kind of virtue gave way as an useless thing, and wic- " kedness

" kedneſs ſupplied its place. The world ſeemed to be " declining apace towards its evening, and the ſecond " coming of the Son of man to draw near: for love " was grown cold, and faith was not found upon earth. " All things were in confuſion, and the world looked " as if it would return to its old chaos.—All ſorts of " fornication were committed with the ſame freedom as " if they had been lawful actions: for men neither bluſh- " ed at them, nor were puniſhed for them. — Nor did " the clergy live better than the people: for the Biſhops " were grown negligent of the duty of their place, *&c.* " In a word, men ran themſelves headlong into all vice, " and all fleſh had corrupted its way." And farther, to ſhew the great neglect of prieſts and Biſhops in the work of teaching and inſtructing, which is ſo neceſſary to the preſerving of tradition inviolable, I will add the teſtimony of one (*Elfric. ferm. ad ſacerdot.*) who lived in thoſe times; who tells us, that " in thoſe days the " prieſts and Biſhops, who ought to have been the pil- " lars of the church, were ſo negligent, that they did " not mind the divine ſcripture; nor take any care to " teach and inſtruct ſcholars that might ſucceed them, " as we read holy men had uſed to do, who left many " ſcholars perfectly inſtructed to be their ſucceſſors." If they had only neglected the ſcriptures, all might have been well enough; but it ſeems they took no care to inſtruct people in the way of oral tradition, nor to furniſh the church with a new generation of able teach- ers, who might " deliver down from hand to hand the " ſenſe and faith of forefathers." This laſt teſtimony the late learned Lord Primate of Ireland, Biſhop Uſher, (in his book, *De Chriſtian. eccleſ. ſucceſſ.* &c. *c.* 2. *&* 3. where ſeveral of the teſtimonies I have produced, with many more to the ſame purpoſe, may be ſeen), cites out of a MS. in Bennet college library in Cambridge; con- cerning the authority of which MS. there need be no diſpute between Mr. S. and me; becauſe the whole force and effect of this teſtimony is ſufficiently contained in thoſe citations which I have brought out of publick and unqueſtionable books.

§ 4. All theſe teſtimonies which I have produced, are, in general, and for the ſubſtance of them, confirmed by

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two of the greateſt props of the Romiſh church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine (*De Rom. Pontif. l.* 4. *c.* 12.) ſays of this tenth age, that "there was never a-"ny either more unlearned or more unhappy." Baronius (*Annal. tom.* 10. *ann.* 900) ſpeaks more particularly: "What was then the face of the Roman church? How "deformed? when whores, no leſs powerful than vile, "bore the chief ſway at Rome; and, at their pleaſure, "changed ſees, appointed Biſhops, and (which it is hor-"rible to mention) did thruſt into St. Peter's ſee their own "gallants, falſe Popes, who would not have been menti-"oned in the catalogue of the Roman Popes, but only "for the more diſtinct recording of ſo long a ſucceſſi-"on of times?" And a little after, "Chriſt was then, "it ſeems, in a very deep ſleep;—and, which was worſe, "when the Lord was thus aſleep, there were no diſci-"ples to awaken him, being themſelves all faſt aſleep. "What kind of Cardinals, Preſbyters, and Deacons, "can we think were choſen by theſe monſters, when "nothing is ſo natural as for every one to propagate "his own likeneſs?" It is very much, that theſe lewd women, and their favourite Popes, Cardinals, and Biſhops, who then ſwayed the church, ſhould, when they were ſo careleſs of their own ſouls, be ſo tender of the ſalvation of poſterity; and when they adminiſtered all other affairs of the church ſo extravagantly, ſhould be ſo careful of the main chance, as to tranſmit the Chriſtian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to ſucceeding ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonſtrated this *à poſteriori*, which ſeems ſo very ſtrange to a man that conſiders things *à priori*.

§ 5. But it may be this diſmal ſtate of the Roman church laſted but a little while; and ſhe did in the ſame age, before tradition could be interrupted, recover herſelf out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore inquire a little into the ſtate of ſucceeding times. And I find, in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard (*in converſ. Sancti Pauli, ſerm.* 1.) complaining, that the degeneracy of the prieſts was in his days greater than ever: "We cannot (ſays he) now ſay, As is the "people, ſo is the prieſt; for the people are not ſo bad "as their prieſts." In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis,

Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, "Of the corrupt ſtate of the church;" by which we may make ſome judgment, whether in that age it was (as Mr. S. ſays) impoſſible, but that the Chriſtian doctrine ſhould be entirely preſerved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He ſays, *c.* 3. there was an univerſal degeneracy in the church, "from the "very head of it to its loweſt members." In the ſame chapter he complains, "Who is there that preaches the "goſpel to the people? who ſhews them the way to ſal-"vation, either by word or action?" It ſeems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition. Again, ſpeaking of the Pope's taking to himſelf the collation of all vacant biſhopricks and dignities, he ſays, *c.* 5. one might think the Pope did this, "that the church "might be provided of worthier governors, both in re-"ſpect of their learning and their lives, did not the "thing itſelf declare the contrary; and that ignorant "and uſeleſs perſons, provided they had money, were "by ſimony advanced to the higheſt degrees in the "church." And, ſpeaking what a vaſt number of candidates there was uſually at Rome, from all parts, waiting for benefices and dignities, he tells us, *c.* 6. that many of theſe "did not come from their ſtudies, or "from ſchools of learning, to govern pariſhes, but "from the plough, and from the meaneſt profeſſions; "and that they underſtood Latin and Arabick much at "the ſame rate; and many of them could not read at "all. But it may be (ſays he) their manners were ſuch "as might be ſome excuſe for their ignorance. No; "though their learning was but little, their virtue was "leſs; for, being brought up in idleneſs, they followed "nothing but debauchery and ſports, *&c.* Hence it "comes to paſs, that, in all places, there are ſo many "wicked, and wretched, and ignorant prieſts.—Hence "it is, that prieſts are ſo contemned by the common "people.—Formerly the prieſthood was highly honour-"ed by the people, and nothing was more venerable "than that order of men; but now nothing is more "vile and deſpicable."—"I make no doubt, but there "are now more thieves and robbers, than true paſtors "in the church," *c.* 9.—"Why ſhould any man now

"flatter

" flatter himſelf with hopes of preferment, becauſe of " his virtue or learning? Men do not now, as former- " ly, riſe in the church by ſuch arts," *c.* 11.—" Which " of thoſe that are now-a-days advanced to the Pontifi- " cal dignity, hath ſo much as perfunctorily read, or " heard, or learned the ſcriptures; yea, or ever touched " any more than the cover of the Bible?" *c.* 13. A- gain, ſpeaking of the prodigious covetouſneſs of the governors of the church, and the groſs neglect of their flocks: " They would (ſays he, *c.* 14.) much more " contentedly bear the loſs of ten thouſand ſouls, than " of ten or twelve ſhillings. But why do I ſay more con- " tentedly, when, without the leaſt trouble or diſtur- " bance to themſelves, they can bear the loſs of ſouls? " a thing ſo far from their care, that it never entered " into their thoughts." Had the hereticks of thoſe days but had wit enough, and a little money, they might, it ſeems, for a ſmall ſum, have hired the go- vernors of the church to have renounced tradition, or to have ceaſed to propagate it, though they had known that in ſo doing they ſhould have damned all their poſte- rity. He goes on, and tells us, that " if there were " perhaps any one who did not take theſe courſes, the " reſt would all ſnarl at him, call him fool, and ſay he " was unfit to be a prieſt.—So that the ſtudy of the ſcri- " ptures, together with the profeſſors of it, was turned " into laughter and ſcorn by all; but, which is prodi- " gious, eſpecially by the Popes, who preferred their own " traditions many degrees before the commands of God." I deſire Mr. S. to take notice in what kind of times tra- dition was ſet up againſt ſcripture. Again, ſpeaking of the choice of perſons to be prieſts, he tells us, *c.* 16. that " there was no inquiry made into their lives, no " queſtion about their manners. As for their learning, " (ſays he), what need I ſpeak of that, when we ſee " the prieſts, almoſt univerſally, have much ado to " read, though but in an heſitating and ſpelling faſhi- " on, drawing out one ſyllable after another, without " underſtanding either the ſenſe of what they read, or " the words?" I am now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced, that there was great need of it in thoſe ages, in which ſcarce any of the prieſts could either write

or read. I omit the particulars of what he ſays (*c.* 20. 21. 23.) concerning the common "drunkenneſs and incontinency of prieſts, who [becauſe they made conſcience of marriage] kept whores in their houſes;" concerning the diſſolute lives of monks; and concerning nunneries, which, inſtead of being "the ſanctuaries of God, were the abominable ſtews of Venus, and the receptacles of laſcivious young men; inſomuch (ſays he) that at this day it is the ſame thing to put a virgin into a nunnery, and to make her a common ſtrumpet." And, to ſhew that he does not ſpeak theſe things of a few, but with relation to the general corruption of that age, he adds, *c.* 25. "that wickedneſs did ſo abound in all orders of men, that ſcarce one among a thouſand was to be found who did truly live up to his profeſſion; and if there was any one that did not follow theſe lewd courſes, he became ridiculous to others, and was branded either as an inſolent ſingular madman, or an hypocrite." I will conclude this long teſtimony with the character which he gives (*c.* 27.) of one of the Popes of his time, Clement by name, *viz.* That "he did chiefly apply himſelf to gratify and oblige all the paraſites and buffoons that had any intereſt in the ſeveral courts of princes; and, to this end, did confer upon theſe, and upon handſome young boys, (which he much delighted in), almoſt all the vacant biſhopricks, and moſt of the other church-dignities" It is well that oral tradition hath the ſecurity of infallibility, otherwiſe it had in all probability been loſt among this lewd ſort of people, which yet they gravely call *the holy Roman Catholick church.*

§ 6. To this effect I might have produced teſtimonies concerning every age from the ninth to the ſixteenth: but Mr. Creſſy hath ſaved me that labour; who acknowledges, (*Exomolog. c.* 68.), that "theſe worſt times of the church, when ignorance, worldlineſs, pride, tyranny, *&c.* reigned with ſo much ſcope; when the Popes (ſo wicked, ſo abominable in their lives) enjoyed ſo unlimited a power even over ſecular princes themſelves, and much more over the clergy:" I ſay, he acknowledges, that "theſe worſt times continued during the ſpace of about ſix ages before Luther." A competent

competent time, one would think, for tradition to have miſcarried in, were it not, as Mr. S. ſays, indefectible. Mr. Creſſy indeed tells us, (*ibid.*), that this "was to him "an irrefragable teſtimony of a ſtrange watchfulneſs of "divine providence over the church, to preſerve it "from the gates of hell (that is, eſtabliſhed and dan-"gerous errors) during theſe worſt times." And very likely it is that this might appear ſo to ſuch a Catholick, "whoſe judgment (he tells us) it is, to renounce his "own judgment." But it will never appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judgment about him, unleſs Mr. Creſſy can prove, that by that phraſe, *viz. the gates of hell*, the ſcripture does not mean groſs wickedneſs of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewiſe, that a general vitiouſneſs and debauchery of manners is not as pernicious to Chriſtianity, and as deſtructive to the end of it, as eſtabliſhed errors in doctrine; and if ſo, that the providence of God is not equally concerned to preſerve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved theſe three things, then this declamatory diſcourſe of his may ſignify ſomething, but not before.

§ 7. Now, if this be a true repreſentation of the ſtate of the Roman church in thoſe ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads theſe teſtimonies, think it impoſſible that the doctrine of Chriſt ſhould have been depraved in this age; or that the moſt ſenſeleſs and abſurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Chriſtian doctrines; when ſcarce any one knew what the doctrine of Chriſt was; when a general ignorance of letters, and almoſt an univerſal ſtupidity and madneſs, had ſeized upon the minds of men; when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety, both in the head and members of the church; when the lives of the Popes were tragically wicked, and no footſteps of piety appeared in them; when for about 150 years together, in a continued ſucceſſion of fifty Popes, there was ſcarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) ſat in that chair; when the whores governed Rome, and put out and put in Biſhops at their pleaſure, and made their own gallants Popes, who would be ſure to make a

college of Cardinals of ſuch monſters as themſelves; when pretty boys, and paraſites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the noſe, and were gratified with the beſt biſhopricks and dignities in the church; when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Chriſtian faith; when in many countries, neither ſacraments nor other eccleſiaſtical rites were obſerved; when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than theſe, were the common ſtudy and practice; when intemperance, and all kind of lewdneſs and debauchery, reigned in all ſorts and orders of men; when the generality of Biſhops and Prieſts (who, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, *Dial.* 3. § 3. can only teach the traditionary doctrine) were ignorant in the ſcriptures, and in every thing elſe, very few of them being able ſo much as to read tolerably; and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to ſucceed them in their office; and in the lewdneſs of their lives did ſurpaſs the vileſt of the people? Was not ſuch an age a fit ſeaſon to plant the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation in? Or if any thing more monſtrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in ſo rank a ſoil? Doth Mr. S. think it impoſſible, that thoſe that were born in the church then ſhould be ignorant of the doctrine of Chriſt, when ſcarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when ſo few underſtood, and fewer practiſed it? When prodigious impiety and wickedneſs did overſpread the church, from the Pope down to the meaneſt of the laity, can any one believe, that men generally made conſcience to inſtruct their children in the true faith of Chriſt? Was it impoſſible there ſhould be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed; that there ſhould be any miſtake about the doctrine of Chriſt, when there was ſo much ignorance? unleſs he be of Mr. Ruſhworth's mind, who (*Dial.* 3. § 7.) reckons ignorance among the parents of religion. Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? Were they ſtrongly applied, or were they not? Were they cauſes of actual will in Chriſtians to believe well when they lived ſo ill? Or is Chriſtianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of

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no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath Christ taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? as the great Cardinal Perron, stooping below his own wit and reason to serve a bad cause, tells us, (*Reply to King James, l.* 4. *c.* 6.), that "the church sings, and will sing "to the end of the world, *I am black, but I am fair;* "that is to say, I am black in manners, but fair in do- "ctrine:" As if the meaning of the prophecies and promises of scripture made to the church were this, that, by the extraordinary care of God's providence, and peculiar assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be wicked, but othodox, to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous causes imprinting Christ's doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else; and of securing that see, and its supreme pastor, in the faith and practice of the Christian doctrine, above any other see or pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in history, as not to understand the dismal state of religion in the Romish church in those times? Who does not know what advantages the Bishops of Rome, and their servile clergy, made of the ignorance and superstition of those and the succeeding ages; and by what arts and steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after; when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great King walk barefoot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of petulant monks: when they could send any man upon an errand to visit the holy sepulchre, or the shrine of such a saint; and command five or six Kings with great armies upon a needless expedition into the holy land, that so, during their absence, they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impose upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) absurd and counterfeit tales of ancient saints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition; and could bring that foppish book the *Legend* almost into equal authority and veneration with the Bible; and persuade the easy people, that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kissed it when he laid it down? Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the Roman Bishops and clergy in those ages, the

ſtrange feats they played, and what abſurdities they impoſed upon the ſuperſtitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine, not only the poſſibility, but the eaſineſs of innovating new doctrines as they pleaſed, under the ſpecious pretences of antiquity, and conſtant and uninterrupted tradition.

§ 8. And this kind of diſcourſe concerning the poſſibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculouſly compares it, (*Apology for tradition*, *p.* 49.), as if an orator ſhould go about to perſuade people, that "George, by the help of a long ſtaff, and "a nimble caſt of his body, and ſuch like advantages, "might leap over Paul's ſteeple; never conſidering all "the while the diſproportion of all theſe advantages to "the height of the ſteeple: ſo (ſaith he) he that diſcourſeth at large how errors uſe to ſlide into man's life, "without comparing the power of the cauſes of error to "the ſtrength of reſiſting, which conſiſts in this princi-"ple, Nothing is to be admitted but what deſcends by "tradition, *&c.* ſays no more towards proving an er-"ror's over-running the church, than the orator for "George's leaping over the ſteeple." How vain is this, when it appears, from this inſtance that I have given of the ſtate of the Roman church in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the cauſes of error were infinitely ſtronger than the power of reſiſtance? The great cauſes of error are, ignorance and vice: where ignorance reigns, there is no power; where vice, no will to reſiſt it. And how great the ignorance and vitiouſneſs of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too too apparent from the teſtimonies I have brought. Where was the ſtrength of reſiſting error, when for 150 years together the Popes were the vileſt of men, Biſhops and Prieſts overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and moſt ſupinely negligent in inſtructing the people? In ſuch a degenerate ſtate of a church, what ſtrength is there in this principle, "Nothing is to "be admitted but what deſcends by tradition?" When thoſe who ought to teach men what that doctrine is which was derived to them by tradition, are generally careleſs of their duty, and ignorant themſelves what that doctrine is; when they addict themſelves wholly to the ſatisfying

ſatisfying of their ambition, and other luſts, and carrying on deſigns of gain, and getting dominion over the people; what can hinder men ſo diſpoſed from corrupting the doctrine of Chriſt, and ſuiting it to their own luſts and intereſts? And what ſhall hinder the people from embracing thoſe corruptions, when, by the negligence of their paſtors to inſtruct them, and not only ſo, but alſo by their being deprived of the ſcriptures in a known tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true doctrine of Chriſt is? So that in an age of ſuch profound ignorance and vice, and general neglect of inſtruction, it is ſo far from being impoſſible for errors to over-run a church, that the contrary is morally impoſſible; and George's long ſtaff, and advantageous caſt of his body, are more powerful cauſes to enable him to leap over Paul's ſteeple, than this principle, "That "nothing is to be admitted but what deſcends by tradi-"tion," is to keep errors out of a church in an ignorant and vitious age, when few or none are either able or willing to inſtruct men in the truth. For ſuppoſe this always to have been the principle of Chriſtians, *viz.* "That nothing is to be admitted as the doctrine of "Chriſt, but what is deſcended to them by tradition;" how ſhall this principle ſecure the church from hereſy, any more than this, *viz.* "That nothing but truth is to "be aſſented to," doth ſecure men from error? or more than this, *viz.* "That no man is to do any thing but "what is wiſe and virtuous," does ſecure the generality of mankind from folly and vice?

SECT. VIII. *The ſecond anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. THE principles upon which this demonſtration relies, are not ſufficiently proved by him.

His firſt principle is this, "That age which holds her "faith delivered thus from the Apoſtles, neither can it-"ſelf have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt "that any age ſince the Apoſtles had changed or inno-"vated any thing therein. This propoſition (he tells "us) needs no proof to evidence it, but only an explica-"tion: for ſince no man can hold contrary to his "knowledge,

" knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change " or innovate in the caſe propoſed without knowing he " did ſo; it is a manifeſt impoſſibility a whole age ſhould " fall into an abſurdity ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of " one ſingle man." But (by his favour) that which he ſays is no proof, but only an explication, is a proof, if it be any thing; and the force of it is this: " That " which is inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle " man, is manifeſtly impoſſible to a whole age; but it " is inconſiſtent with the nature of any ſingle man to " hold contrary to his knowledge, *&c.* therefore impoſ- " ſible to a whole age: and conſequently, that age " which holds her faith delivered thus from the Apo- " ſtles, neither can itſelf have changed any thing, nor, " *&c.*" So that, in order to the making good of this firſt principle, Mr. S. hath left nothing unproved, but only this propoſition, namely, That it is impoſſible that any one ſingle man that holds his faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the Apoſtles, ſhould either himſelf have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any age ſince the Apoſtles hath changed or innovated any thing therein. And to make out the truth of this propoſition, there only remains this to be proved, *viz.* That it is impoſſible for any ſingle man to be miſtaken: for if that be poſſible, then, contrary to Mr. S. a man may hold that to have been delivered as a doctrine of faith from the Apoſtles which was not ſo delivered.

§ 2. His ſecond principle is this, " That no age " could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that " very thing to poſterity as received from Chriſt by con- " tinual ſucceſſion." He proves it thus: " Since man " is a rational creature, he muſt have ſome reaſon or " motive, good or bad, which he propoſeth to himſelf " as an end to be atchieved by his action: and whate- " ver his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling " poſterity a late invented thing was held immediately " before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore, ſince " a ſeen impoſſibility cannot be a motive to one not " frantick, and ſince it is evidently impoſſible they " ſhould make poſterity believe a thing ſo univerſally " known to be falſe, as this muſt needs be, *&c.* it is " as impoſſible this principle ſhould faulter, as that the

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" foregoing age ſhould conſpire to act without a motive, " or that the ſucceeding age ſhould believe what they " know to be otherwiſe; that is, ſhould hold both ſides " of a contradiction in a clear matter of fact." The force of which is this, That it is impoſſible that any man not frantick ſhould attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine, becauſe the immediate end of ſuch an attempt muſt be to have his new doctrine believed; but it is impoſſible he ſhould attain this end, and impoſſible he ſhould not ſee that it is impoſſible to attain it: now, a ſeen impoſſibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantick; therefore no man that is not frantick can attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine. Thus he hath demonſtrated it impoſſible that there ſhould be any hereticks, if a heretick be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine: for if there be any ſuch attempters, they muſt be frantick; and if they be frantick, they can be no hereticks: for hereſy implies a crime, but God will not impute the actions of madmen to them as faults. Again, ſuppoſe he that attempts to innovate be miſtaken, (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretick is fallible), and think that which he delivers as Chriſt's doctrine to be really ſo, though indeed it be not; why ſhould ſuch a perſon think it impoſſible to make men believe that to be received from Chriſt which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was ſo? And if this be granted, then it is not impoſſible that man, though he be a rational creature, may attempt to innovate. And if ſo, then his ſecond principle is not proved. If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble ſcience of controverſy, (whereof he pretends to be ſo great a maſter), he would not bring ſuch trifling ſophiſms inſtead of demonſtrative proofs; and nothing leſs than a demonſtrative proof will ſerve to eſtabliſh any principle upon which a demonſtration is to be built.

Sect. IX. *The third anſwer to Mr. S.'s ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. DOctrines and practices which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame

ſame pretence to uninterrupted tradition. And of this I ſhall give ſeveral inſtances; one among the Jews, the reſt among Chriſtians.

1*ſt*, I ſhall inſtance among the traditionary Jews, whoſe perſuaſion in our Saviour's time was, and ſtill is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their *Cabala*, hath deſcended to them from Moſes uninterruptedly. Now, here is the exiſtence of ſuch a perſuaſion as Mr. S. affirms to be "impoſſible without tradition's ever-inde-"ficiency to beget it." And this perſuaſion of theirs is moſt exactly parallel with the pretenſions of the Romiſh church, according to Mr. S. For here's a multitude of traditionary Jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the diſſenters in that church, than the Romiſh church is in compariſon to thoſe Chriſtians that diſſent from her. Joſephus tells us, (*Antiq. Jud. l.* 13. *c.* 18.), that "the richer ſort were of the perſuaſion of the Sad-"ducees, but the multitude were on the Phariſees ſide." So that the Phariſees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome, that they were the greateſt number, and ſo they continue to this very day; inſomuch that although they do not call themſelves the Catholicks, yet I am ſure they call all Jews that do diſſent from them ſchiſmaticks. Now, that the Sadducees were for the written law againſt oral tradition, is, I confeſs, no credit to us; but that our Saviour reproved the traditionary doctrines and practices of the Phariſees, becauſe by them they made void the written law, is much more to the diſcredit of the aſſerters of oral tradition. Both Romaniſts and Phariſees they own alike a written doctrine; but then they both pretend the true ſenſe and explication thereof to have deſcended to them by oral tradition. For juſt as the traditionary Chriſtians do now, ſo Joſephus tells us (*ibid. l.* 17. *c.* 3. *& de bell. Jud. l.* 1. *c.* 4. *& l.* 2. *c.* 12.) the traditionary Jews of old, the Phariſees, did pretend by their oral tradition to interpret the law more accurately and exactly than any other ſect. In like manner he tells us, (*Antiq. l.* 18. *c.* 2.), that "all things that be-"longed to prayer and divine worſhip, were regulated "and adminiſtered according to their interpretations of "the law." And they both agree in this, to *make void* the

the word of God by their tradition; which the Phariſees did no otherwiſe than Mr. S. does, by equalling oral tradition to ſcripture; nay preferring it above ſcripture, in making it the ſole rule of faith, and interpreting the ſcripture according to it. Hence are thoſe common ſayings in the Talmud, and other Jewiſh books: "Do not "think that the written law is the foundation, but that "the law orally delivered is the right foundation;" which is to ſay with Mr. S. that not the ſcripture, but oral tradition, is the true rule of faith. Again, "There "is more in the words of the ſcribes, (*viz.* the teſtifiers "of tradition), than in the words of the written law." Again, "The oral law excels the written, as much as "the ſoul doth the body;" which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the ſcripture without tradition is but a dead letter, deſtitute of life and ſenſe. Hence alſo it is, that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themſelves to the dictates of tradition, even in the moſt abſurd things; as appears by that common ſaying among them: "If the ſcribes ſay that the right hand is the left, "and the left the right, (that bread is fleſh, and wine "is blood), hearken to them;" that is, make no ſcruple of whatſoever they deliver as tradition, though never ſo contrary to reaſon or ſenſe. And, laſtly, the doctrines of the Phariſees were many of them practical; ſuch were all thoſe which concerned external rites and obſervances, as *waſhing of hands and cups*, &c. So that theſe Phariſaical traditions had alſo that unſpeakable advantage which Mr. S. ſays renders their traditions unmiſtakeable, that they were daily practiſed, and came down "clad in ſuch plain matters of fact, that the moſt "ſtupid man living could not poſſibly be ignorant of "them." Therefore, according to Mr. S.'s principles, it was impoſſible that any age of the Jews ſhould be perſuaded that theſe things were commanded by Moſes, and ever ſince obſerved, if they had not been ſo: and yet our Saviour denies theſe cuſtoms to have been of any ſuch authority as they pretended.

§ 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to ſhew the agreement which is between the traditionary Jews and Papiſts; their own writers ſo liberally acknowledging

ledging it. Mr. White indeed ſays, (*De fid. & theol. tract.* 1. § 6.), that "the faith of the Jews was not de-"livered to them orally, but by writing." Than which nothing can be more inconſiſtent with his hypotheſis: for if the Jewiſh faith was conveyed to them not orally, but by writing; then, either the Jewiſh church had no ſufficient rule of faith, or elſe a writing may be ſuch a rule. But other of their champions make great uſe of the parallel between the traditionary Jews and the Romiſh church to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full paſſage to this purpoſe, (*Rep. to K. James, obſerv.* 3. *c.* 4.), "As "this (ſays he) is to preſerve a ſound and entire reſpect "to the majeſty of the ancient Moſaick ſcripture, to be-"lieve and obſerve not only all the things which are "therein actually contained, but alſo thoſe things which "are therein contained mediately and relatively; as the "doctrines of paradiſe, *&c.* which were not contained "therein but mediately, and by the authority which it "gave to the depoſition of the Patriarchal and Moſaick "tradition, preſerved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of "the ſynagogue; ſo this is to preſerve a ſound and en-"tire reſpect to the majeſty of the Apoſtolical ſcripture, "to believe and obſerve all the things which it contains, "not only immediately, and by itſelf, but mediately, "and by reference to the Apoſtolical traditions; to "which in groſs and generally it gives the authority of "Apoſtolical doctrines, and to the church the authority "of guardian and depoſitary to preſerve and atteſt "them." Voyſin, in his obſervations upon Raymundus Martin, (*Pugio fid. p.* 145.), tells us, that "as in "the old law the great conſiſtory at Jeruſalem was the "foundation of the true tradition; ſo (ſays he) the ſee "of Rome is the foundation of our tradition. And as "the continual ſucceſſion of the High Prieſts and fa-"thers among the Jews, was the great confirmation of "the truth of their traditions; ſo (ſays he) with us the "truth of our Catholick doctrine is confirmed by a con-"tinual ſucceſſion of Popes."

§ 3. From all this it appears, that the Phariſees among the Jews made the ſame pretence to oral tradition which the Papiſts do at this day, according to Mr. S.

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And if so, then Mr. S.'s demonstration *à posteriori* is every whit as strong for the Jews against our Saviour, as it is for the Papists against the Protestants. For we find that, in our Saviour's time, it was then the present persuasion of the traditionary Jews, that their faith, and their rites, and the true sense and interpretation of their written law, was descended from Moses and the prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was most firmly rooted in their hearts. But the Jews had constant tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince: and though the letter of the prophecies concerning him might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did infallibly know, that their Messiah was to be another kind of person, from "sense written in their "hearts," from the interpretation of those prophecies orally brought down to them, "from the Patriarchal "and Mosaick tradition preserved by heart, and in the "oral doctrine of the synagogue, and from the living "voice of their church essential;" that is, the universal consent of the then traditionary Jews. If it be said, that the Jewish tradition did indeed bring down several doctrines not contained in scripture, of paradise, of hell, of the last judgment, of the resurrection, *&c.* (as Cardinal Perron affirms), but it did not bring down this point of the Messiah's being a temporal prince; then, as Mr. S. asks us, *p.* 76. so the Jew does him, "By what vir-"tue tradition brought down these other points? and "whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring "down this, as well as those?" Then he will ask him farther, "Is there not a necessary connexion and rela-"tion between a constant cause, and its formal effect; "so that if its formal effect be points received as deli-"vered ever, the proper cause must be an ever-delivery? "whence he will argue from such an effect to its cause "for any particular point, and consequently for this "point that is in controversy between Jews and Chri-"stians, (concerning the Messiah's being a temporal "prince), in case it be a point held ever delivered:" but most certain it is, it was so held by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and hath been held so ever since to this day.

I ſhall not trouble the reader with tranſcribing the reſt of this demonſtration; only deſire him, as he reads it over, to imagine, inſtead of Mr. S. a Phariſee demonſtrating, againſt one of Chriſt's diſciples, the infallibility of the oral tradition of the Jews: and I doubt not, but he will find this demonſtration, and every part of it, changing only the names, as forcibly concluding Chriſt not to be the Meſſiah, as it doth infer any point of Popery againſt the Proteſtants.

§ 4. Before I leave this inſtance of the Jewiſh tradition, I ſhall briefly conſider what Mr. White hath offered by way of anſwer to it, (*Apol. p.* 123, *&c.*); as, firſt, that "the matter of theſe traditions is nothing elſe but "explications of ſcripture framed and invented by their "own Rabbins." So we ſay, that the Popiſh traditions are innovations. But then, Mr. White and Mr. S. tell us, that they can demonſtrate them to be deſcended from Chriſt and his Apoſtles; becauſe it is the preſent perſuaſion of a multitude of Chriſtians that they are ſo deſcended. In like manner, if this demonſtration be good, the Jews can prove their traditions to be deſcended from Moſes and the Prophets. Secondly, He ſays, that "the form of theſe traditions is more ridiculous "than the canting of gypſies, or the juggling of hocus-"pocus; becauſe it conſiſts in inventing the ſenſe of "the ſcripture from the myſteries, and numbers, and "changes of letters." This is a groſs inexcuſable miſtake: for though the Jews have ſuch a cabala, called *Gematry*, as this which Mr. White deſcribes; yet that cabala which is argued in this inſtance, and which our Saviour reproves in the Phariſees by the name of *tradition*, is quite another thing, and, among the Jewiſh writers, known by the name of the *unwritten* or *oral law*; which they ſay was delivered to Moſes on mount Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron, and Joſhua, and the elders, and ſucceſſively delivered down from one age to another; and at laſt by Rabbi Jehudah compiled into one volume, which they call *Miſhna*, or Δευτέρωσις. And this does not conſiſt in the art of numbering, combining, or changing of letters, as Mr. White imagines. But ſuppoſe it did ſo, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be, the inſtance would be ſo much the more

more concluſive againſt them, if what they affirm be true, that oral tradition is infallible, and that the perſuaſion of a traditionary church in any age, that ſuch a doctrine deſcended to them from Chriſt or Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo: for if this be ſufficient evidence, it is nothing to the purpoſe what the doctrine be, either for matter or form; for if it be once demonſtrated to have come from Chriſt or Moſes, it is, without any farther diſpute, to be received as of divine authority. So that Mr. White quite alters the ſtate of the queſtion; which was not, Whether the Jewiſh cabala be abſurd and ridiculous? but, Whether the general perſuaſion of the Jews in any age, that it deſcended to them by uninterrupted tradition from Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo? If it be, then the Jewiſh cabala is as demonſtratively of divine authority as the oral doctrine of the Papiſts. Thirdly, He ſays, "This cabala was a "doctrine delivered to few, and that with ſtrict charge "to keep it from publicity, and ſo communicate it a-"gain ſucceſſively to a ſelect committee of a few: where-"in (ſays he) you may ſee as fair an opportunity for "juggling and cozenage, as in our caſe there is an im-"poſſibility." This, I think, is true of the cabala, which it ſeems Mr. White had only in his view; but is a horrible miſtake, if he ſpeaks of the oral law, which was contained in the Miſhna, and which this inſtance only intends. For of this Maimonides (*in præfat. ſum. Talmud.*) ſays expreſsly, that, "in every age, from the time "of Moſes to Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the Miſh-"na, the oral law was publickly taught; and that, af-"ter Rabbi Jehuda had compiled it into one volume, "the Iſraelites did generally write out copies of it; and "it was every where carefully taught, for fear leſt the "oral law ſhould, by forgetfulneſs, be loſt among the "Jews." So that, upon account of the publickneſs of the doctrine, there is as great an impoſſibility of juggling and cozenage in the caſe of the Jewiſh as of the Romiſh tradition. Beſides, was waſhing of hands and cups, which they alſo pretended to have come down to them from Moſes, and to have been conſtantly practiſed in every age, a ſecret thing? was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a ſenſible matter? If therefore no

age can conſpire to impoſe upon the next in a plain cuſtom; and if an univerſal tradition of ſuch a thing cannot come in without ſuch a conſpiracy, how could this be the perſuaſion of any age, that waſhing of hands, &c. was preſcribed by Moſes, and practiſed in all ages, if it had not truly been ſo?

§ 5. *2dly*, As for inſtances among Chriſtians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as, namely, the various and oppoſite traditions about the time of Eaſter, and concerning the baptiſm of hereticks, and the apoſtolical tradition (as St. Auſtin calls it) concerning the admiſſion of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controverſy, and none of them yet ſufficiently anſwered: I ſhall, to avoid tediouſneſs, paſſing by theſe, inſiſt only upon that of the *chiliaſt*; which, in Juſtin Martyr's time, was the perſuaſion of all orthodox Chriſtians; that is, (in Mr. S.'s dialect), of all the holders to tradition. For if, notwithſtanding the perſuaſion of that age, that this doctrine was deſcended to them from the Apoſtles, it was not really ſo deſcended; then the perſuaſion of Chriſtians in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the Apoſtles, is no demonſtration that it was ſo.

§ 6. To this inſtance Mr. White anſwers, (*Apol. p.* 78. 79. *&c.*), by telling us, that Euſebius ſays, that this tradition ſprang from Papias, a good, but a credulous and ſimple man, who it ſeems was miſtaken in ſaying, that it was the Apoſtles doctrine. But, for all this, Juſtin Martyr ſays, it was received by all orthodox Chriſtians in his time, as a doctrine deſcended to them from the Apoſtles. And if Juſtin ſaid true, nothing can make more againſt their demonſtration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural conſequence from theſe two ſayings of Euſebius and Juſtin; which is this, That the miſtake of one ſimple and credulous man may, in an age or two, give occaſion to the univerſal entertainment of a doctrine, as deſcended down to them from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, when there was no ſuch matter. Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great ſervice by this anſwer? But it is according to his manner, in all his writings, to ſay any thing to remove a preſent objection, though never ſo much to the prejudice

dice of his main hypotheſis: than which, I do not know any quality in a writer, which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of ſincerity, or of a good cauſe.

§ 7. And whereas he ſays, (*Apol. p.* 81.), that "Irenæus's teſtimony proves it to be no tradition: for "he ſets down the ſuppoſed words of our Saviour, "which plainly ſhews it is a ſtory, not a tradition; a "tradition being a ſenſe delivered, not in ſet words, "but ſettled in the auditors hearts by hundreds of different expreſſions explicating the ſame meaning:" When I conſider this paſſage of Mr. White, I confeſs I cannot compliment him, and ſay, (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue between them, *Ruſhworth, dial.* 4. § 4.), "I cannot but applaud your diſcourſe, it hath "ſo pleaſing and attractive a countenance;" and again, (*ibid.* § 5.), "I am not able to oppoſe what you "ſay by any weighty objection, your arguments being "not only ſtrong and nervous, but of ſo comely and "winning a complexion, *&c.*:" I cannot, I ſay, ſpeak all this of his preſent argument; but I may deſervedly apply to it the laſt part of his nephew's compliment, that it is an argument ſo framed, "as if, without any evi-"dence of its conſequence, it would perſuade men to "believe it." But to return an anſwer to this paſſage: It ſeems, according to Mr. White, that Irenæus was miſtaken in the very nature of tradition: and if ſo learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, "what can we (to uſe Mr. S.'s words, *p.* 39.) "undertakingly promiſe to weaker heads?" Mr. S. inſtanceth in the creed and ten commandments, as the principal traditions which parents teach their children; but now Mr. White can ſhew plainly, that theſe are no traditions, but ſtories; becauſe "tradition is a ſenſe de-"livered not in ſet words, *&c.*" As if Chriſt and his Apoſtles could deliver no doctrine, unleſs they expreſſed the ſame thing an hundred ſeveral ways. But ſuppoſe they did ſo, which no man hath any reaſon to imagine, becauſe a thing may be expreſſed as plainly by one way as by an hundred; can no man deliver this tradition who ſpeaks it in any one of thoſe expreſſions? If one ſhould employ his ſervant to carry a meſſage, and,

becauſe Mr. White thinks this neceſſary, ſhould ſettle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the ſame thing in an hundred ſeveral expreſſions; and the ſervant ſhould go and deliver this meſſage in one of thoſe very expreſſions that his maſter uſed to him, and ſhould ſay, theſe were his maſter's very words; would not this be well enough?

No; if he had come to ſuch a philoſopher as Mr. White, he would ſoon have given him to underſtand, that he was not fit to bring a meſſage, or to be credited in it, who had ſo little wit as not to know, that a meſſage is a thing not to be delivered in ſet words. And now, I would intreat Mr. White to reconcile himſelf in this matter to his friends. Mr. Ruſhworth ſays, (*Dial.* 1. § 6.), "It is impoſſible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the ſame ſenſe in divers words:" which if it be true, I would fain know what certain courſe Mr. White can preſcribe, "to explicate the ſame meaning by hundreds of different expreſſions;" and, conſequently, how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, "by ſettling the ſenſe of it in the auditors hearts," by ſuch variety of expreſſions. Mr. Creſſy likewiſe, a zealous aſſerter of tradition, does affirm, (*Exomolog.* c. 10. § 4.), that "the primitive churches were even to exceſs ſcrupulous in maintaining the very phraſes of traditionary doctrines;" which, according to Mr. White, plainly ſhews theſe doctrines "to be ſtories, not traditions; becauſe tradition is a ſenſe delivered not in ſet words." The ſame author complains, (*ibid.* c. 19. § 2.), that "few among their learneſt maſters of controverſy propoſe the points to be diſputed between them and the Proteſtants in the language of the church." By which, I ſuppoſe, he does not mean, that theſe controvertiſts were to blame, in that they did not ſettle the ſenſe of theſe points by hundreds of different expreſſions explicating the ſame meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the church had in councils, or otherwiſe, if there be any other way, declared her ſenſe of thoſe points. Again, he ſays, (*ib.* c. 27. § 2.), that "St. Paul, referring to the doctrine ſettled by oral inſtruction, to ſhew the uniformity of it every where, calls it *a form of whol-*

"ſome

" *ſome words.*" From whence we may conclude, either that St. Paul did not well to call the traditionary doctrine (as Mr. Creſſy ſays he does) *a form of words*; or elſe, which is more probable, that Mr. White is miſtaken in ſaying, that " a tradition is a ſenſe not delivered in ſet words." Furthermore, the ſame Mr. Creſſy tells us, (*ib. c.* 28. § 1.), that St. Auguſtine was careful, " not only to deliver traditional truths " themſelves, but the terms alſo in which thoſe truths " were conveyed to his times." But now Mr. White could have informed St. Auguſtine, that this officious care of his was not only ſuperfluous, but pernicious to tradition.

§ 8. But to return to Juſtin's teſtimony; to which the ſum of Mr. White's anſwer is, That " Juſtin eſteemed it " not as a point neceſſary to ſalvation, but rather a piece " of learning higher than the common; ſince he both acknowledges other Catholicks held the contrary, and intitles thoſe of his perſuaſion κατὰ πάντα ὀρθογνώμονες, " right in all opinions; that is, wholly of his own mind." It is not material to my purpoſe, whether or no Juſtin looked upon this as a point neceſſary to ſalvation, ſo long as it is evident, that he looked upon it as a divine revelation, and part of the Chriſtian doctrine. And yet, it ſeems, he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, becauſe he joins it with the doctrine of the reſurrection; and ſays, that it was not diſowned by any, but thoſe who alſo denied the reſurrection. But whereas Mr. White ſays, that " Juſtin acknowledges other Catholicks " to have held the contrary," I hope to make it evident, from the ſcope and ſeries of his diſcourſe, that he acknowledges no ſuch thing; but that the plain deſign of his diſcourſe is, to ſhew, that this doctrine was owned by all true Chriſtians. For when Trypho aſks him, whether the Chriſtians did indeed believe, that Jeruſalem ſhould be rebuilt? *&c.* he returns him this anſwer, (*Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 306. *edit. Lutet.* 1615), " I am not " ſuch a wretch as to ſpeak otherwiſe than I think. I " have told thee before, that myſelf and many others (as " ye all know) are of the mind, that this will come to " paſs. But that many indeed of thoſe Chriſtians who " are [not] of the pure and pious perſuaſion do not own

" this,

" this, I have intimated to thee." That the negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought to be thus inſerted, will be clear to any one that conſiders what follows: for after he had ſpoken of thoſe who diſown this doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther deſcription of them, that though they are called Chriſtians, yet in truth they are not Chriſtians, in theſe words: " For of theſe, (*viz.* the diſowners of this doctrine), " who are called indeed Chriſtians, but are atheiſtical " and impious hereticks, I have ſhewed thee, that they " teach in all points, blaſphemous, atheiſtical, and ab- " ſurd things. But, that ye may know that I do not " ſay this for you only, I will, according to my ability, " compile all theſe diſcourſes which have paſſed between " us, into one piece; in which I will by writing make " profeſſion of this very thing which I now declare to " you. For I do not chuſe to follow men, or the do- " ctrines of men; but God, and ſuch doctrines as are " from him. And though you may have converſed with " ſome who are called Chriſtians, and yet do not ac- " knowledge this; but even dare to blaſpheme the God " of Abraham, and the God of Iſaac, and the God of " Jacob; who alſo ſay, that there is no reſurrection of " the dead, but that ſo ſoon as they die their ſouls are " received into heaven: do not count theſe men Chri- " ſtians; no more than a man that conſiders things " rightly, would own the Sadducees, and ſuch like ſects, " to be Jews, *&c.* But I myſelf, and as many Chriſti- " ans as are thoroughly of the right perſuaſion, do both " know, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the fleſh, " and a thouſand years in Jeruſalem, which ſhall be built, " adorned, and enlarged, *&c.*" Can any thing be plainer, than that Juſtin endeavours by this diſcourſe to ſatisfy Trypho, that this point they were ſpeaking of was a divine doctrine, and owned to be ſo by all Chriſtians, except ſuch as did only bear the name and title of Chriſtians, but were indeed blaſphemous hereticks, and deniers of the reſurrection? By which character, that he intends to deſcribe the impious ſects of the Gnoſticks, will appear by and by. So that Mr. White muſt either allow the inſerting of the negative particle, which Mr. Mede (*Nov. edit. p.* 664.) proves to have been omitted in the copy,

copy, or elſe acknowledge, that thoſe who are "Chriſti-"ans only in name, but in truth are impious, blaſphe-"mous, and abſurd hereticks," may properly be ſaid to be of the pure and pious opinion of the Chriſtians. And if only theſe be the other Catholicks, whom Mr. White ſays Juſtin acknowledges to have held contrary to the Millenaries, I am contented he ſhould make his beſt of them. If Mr. White ſhould blame the inſerting of the negative particle *not* into Juſtin's text, as too great a boldneſs with the fathers; it were eaſily anſwered, that the ſenſe evidently requires it: and in ſuch a caſe it is no boldneſs, but ſuch a liberty as the moſt learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reaſon, ſince the exigency of the ſenſe plainly requires the inſerting of it, demand of him (what he unreaſonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propoſitions of ſcripture, *p.* 31.), to demonſtrate, that the particle *not* was not left out of this clauſe of Juſtin by thoſe who tranſcribed the book. But, beſides the exigency of the ſenſe in this place, that the negative ought to have been inſerted, will appear by the reference which Juſtin makes in this paſſage to ſomething foregoing in the ſame dialogue. "I have (ſays he) de-"clared to thee before, that myſelf and many others are "of the mind that this will come to paſs. But that ma-"ny indeed of thoſe Chriſtians who are [not] of the "pure and pious perſuaſion do not own this, I have in-"timated to thee. For of theſe, who are called indeed "Chriſtians, but are atheiſtical and impious hereticks, I "have ſhewed thee, that they teach in all points, blaſ-"phemous, atheiſtical, and abſurd things." In theſe words he plainly refers to ſome precedent paſſage; which, if it can be found, will be a certain key to open to us the ſenſe of this place. I know, that Mr. Mede, *(ibid.)*, perhaps not obſerving it, thought that paſſage to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies of the Millenary opinion. But it ſeems to me to be ſtill extant: for I find, towards the beginning of this dialogue, after that Juſtin had endeavoured to prove at large out of ſcripture this glorious coming of Chriſt, and to refute thoſe who applied the texts produced by him to that purpoſe, to

Hezekiah,

Hezekiah, and to Solomon; whoſe falling off to idolatry he occaſionally mentions; whereupon Trypho objects to him, That many who were called Chriſtians, did alſo communicate in the idol-feaſts: To this, I ſay, I find Juſtin returning this anſwer, *p.* 253. Firſt, he denies not that there are ſuch as theſe "who own themſelves "Chriſtians, and confeſs the crucified Jeſus to be both "Lord and Chriſt, and yet teach not his doctrines, but "the doctrines of ſeducing ſpirits. But (ſays he) we "who are the diſciples of the true and pure doctrine of "Jeſus Chriſt, are from this very thing the more ſtrengthened in our faith, and become more confirmed in the "hope which by him hath been declared to us. For now "we ſee thoſe things viſibly and effectually accompliſhed, which he beforehand told us would be done in his "name. For he ſaid, *Many ſhall come in my name*, &c." By which hope, any one that reads the antecedents and conſequents, will plainly ſee that Juſtin means the hope of the *millenium*, (which he had been ſpeaking of before); and conſequently of the reſurrection, which he looked upon as having a ſtrict connexion with the doctrine of the *millenium*; becauſe, as he tells us afterwards, this doctrine was denied by none but ſuch as alſo denied the reſurrection. And of theſe men his deſcription runs on in theſe words: Πολλοὶ, &c. "Many (ſaith he) both are "and have been, that have come in the name of Jeſus, "and taught both to ſpeak and do atheiſtical and blaſphemous things; and are by us denominated from "thoſe men from whom each of their doctrines and opinions had its riſe, [namely, as it follows, Marcionites, "Valentinians, &c.]; and all theſe in their ſeveral ways "teach men to blaſpheme the creator of the univerſe, "and the Chriſt whoſe coming was foretold by him, and "the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob. But we have "no communion with them, as knowing them to be a-"theiſtical and impious, &c." This paſſage in hand, when I compare it with the text before quoted, and conſider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very ſame that he refers to in thoſe words, "I have declared to thee, I have intimated to "thee, &c." If ſo, the matter in controverſy is clear, that the doctrine of the *millenium* was univerſal. If it be not

not the ſame, I could wiſh to be ſhewed ſome other place in this dialogue where Juſtin makes any ſuch declaration or intimation. In the mean while, by compariſon of theſe places, it is evident there are but two ſorts of men that Juſtin ſpeaks of: Firſt, who believe the *millenium*: "We the diſciples τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας, "of the true and pure doctrine, *&c. viz.* myſelf and ma-"ny others;" again, "myſelf, and as many Chriſtians "as are thoroughly ὀρθογνώμονες, of the right perſuaſi-"on." Secondly, Who deny the *millenium*: "Many "Chriſtians," ſaith Juſtin. But what Chriſtians? of a right perſuaſion? "That (ſaith he) I have ſignified "before. Τὰς γὰρ, *&c.* For I have ſhewed thee of "them who are called Chriſtians, but are indeed Athe-"iſts and impious hereticks, that they teach blaſphemous, "and atheiſtical, and abſurd things." And true it is, he did ſhew before, that thoſe who denied the *millenium*, were "many in number, and were called Chriſtians, *&c.* "but were teachers of blaſphemous and atheiſtical things, "*&c.* and known to be Atheiſts and impious, *&c.*" But he ſhewed it of none other beſides theſe. So that if this doctrine were likewiſe denied by "many Chriſtians of "the pure and pious perſuaſion," then Juſtin Martyr had foully forgot himſelf: but if not, then it is plain, that the tranſcribers have wronged Juſtin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inſerted. It is worth obſerving by the way, how Mr. White pleaſes himſelf with falſe and frivolous criticiſms upon the words πολλοὺς and ὀρθογνώμονες. Falſe they are, as Mr. White ſhall know if he deſires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceeding diſcourſe: for which reaſon I ſay no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter, as Mr. S. warily ſuggeſts, *p.* 68. not to engage himſelf, nor be hooked by others out of his own infallible way; but leave it wholly to the bird-witted hereticks, as Mr. S. calls them, *p.* 69. to perch upon the ſpecifical natures of words, as he does of things.

§ 9. Beſides theſe inſtances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might inſtance likewiſe in the chief points of Popery, and ſhew, that, for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But becauſe this would

would engage me in tedious diſputes about particular points, I will only ſingle out one of their moſt fundamental doctrines, *viz.* that of tranſubſtantiation; concerning which I ſhall ſhew, that notwithſtanding it is the univerſal perſuaſion of the preſent Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have, any aſſurance, that it was the doctrine of Chriſt, and that it is deſcended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I ſhall not at all contend againſt the word *tranſubſtantiation*, which is generally acknowledged to be new; but only the thing ſignified by it, a ſubſtantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Chriſt. And this I might ſhew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient fathers. But becauſe Mr. White, and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Creſſy, do ſo frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditionary doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publickly held by any Catholick who continued afterwards uncenſured, and in the communion of the church; therefore I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with one clear teſtimony, and that of a very eminent perſon in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom Pope Leo (in an epiſtle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this teſtimony, that, "in the judgment of the apoſtolick ſee, he was free from "all ſtain of hereſy." The paſſage I intend is in his dialogues, between a Catholick, under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eraniſtes*, who ſuſtained the perſon of an heretick. Eraniſtes maintaining, that the body of Chriſt was changed into the ſubſtance of the divinity, he illuſtrates it by this ſimilitude. "As (ſays he, *Dial.* 2.) "the ſymbols of the Lord's body and blood are one "thing before the invocation of the prieſt, but, after "the invocation, are changed, and do become another "thing; ſo the body of our Lord, after his aſcenſion, "is changed into the divine ſubſtance." To which Orthodoxus returns this anſwer. "Thou art caught in "thine own net: becauſe the myſtical ſymbols after "conſecration do not paſs out of their own nature; "for they remain in their former ſubſtance, figure, and "appearance, and may be ſeen and handled even as be"fore." He does not only, in expreſs words, deny the ſubſtance of the ſymbols to be changed; but the occaſion

caſion upon which theſe words are brought in, and the ſcope of them, if they be of any force againſt the heretick's illuſtration, renders them uncapable of any other ſenſe. When Mr. S. hath anſwered this teſtimony, I have more for him.

That which I mainly urge againſt this doctrine, is, the monſtrous abſurdities and contradictions contained in it, together with the neceſſary conſequence of them. Several of the abſurdities of it are well brought together by Scotus; who tells us, (*Diſtinct. l.* 4. *diſt.* 10. *qu.* 1. *n.* 8.), that, to prove the poſſibility of Chriſt's body being contained under the ſpecies of bread and wine, many things muſt be proved which ſeem to involve a contradiction: As, 1. "That one quantum (or extended "body) may be together in the very ſame place with "another. 2. That a leſs quantum may be together "in the ſame place with a greater;" *i. e.* a body of leſs extenſion may occupy not only the ſame, but as much room as a body of greater extenſion does; which is to ſay no more but this, that a body leſs than another may be as great as that other, even whilſt it is leſs than it. 3. "That a greater quantum may be toge-"ther with every part of a leſs quantum;" *i. e.* a body that is greater than another, may be as little as the leaſt part of that other body which is leſs than it. 4. "That "a ſubject may be without quantity;" *i. e.* there may be a body which hath no kind of magnitude. 5. "That a bo-"dy may be ſomewhere where it was not before, with-"out changing its place;" *i. e.* a body may be removed to another place whilſt it remains ſtill in the ſame place. 6. "That a quantum may be without any "quantitative mode;" *i. e.* a body may be extended without any manner of extenſion. "The poſſibility of "all which (he ſaith, and I am very much of his mind) "it would be too tedious a work to prove;" and therefore he only attempts to prove the two laſt; which, in all reaſon, is work enough for one man. All theſe ſeeming contradictions, as he modeſtly calls them, are by his own acknowledgment involved in this doctrine. To theſe I might add many more; as, How a thing can be ſaid to be changed into another thing which did exiſt before? How a body can be preſent in a place after the

manner of a ſpirit? (and yet this they affirm concerning the preſence of Chriſt's body in the ſacrament. One might as well ſay, that ſnow is black, but not after the manner of blackneſs, but in the way of whiteneſs; which is to talk nonſenſe after the manner of ſenſe): How the whole body of Chriſt can be contained under the leaſt ſenſible part of the ſpecies of bread? (as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus adds, that the whole body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he ſays expreſsly, (*ibid. qu.* 1. *n.* 11.), that "the head and the foot "of the body of Chriſt are as far diſtant from one ano-"ther in the ſacrament, as they are in heaven;" as if one ſhould ſay, that a body, all whoſe parts lie within the compaſs of a ſmall pin's head, may yet within that little compaſs have parts two yards diſtant from one another): and, laſtly, How the ſenſible ſpecies of bread, *e. g.* quantity, whiteneſs, ſoftneſs, *&c.* can exiſt without any ſubject? To affirm the poſſibility of which, as generally they do, is to ſay, that there may be quantities of white and ſoft nothings: for this is the plain Engliſh of that aſſertion, "That ſenſible ſpecies may exiſt with-"out a ſubject;" which being ſtripped of thoſe terms of art, *ſpecies* and *ſubject*, that do a little diſguiſe it, it appears to be plain nonſenſe.

Now, the proper and neceſſary conſequence of this doctrine is, to take away all certainty, and eſpecially the certainty of ſenſe. For if that which my ſight, and taſte, and touch, do all aſſure me to be a little piece of wafer, may, notwithſtanding this, be fleſh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then, notwithſtanding the greateſt aſſurance that ſenſe can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what ſenſe reported it to be. If ſo, then farewel the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of ſenſe. And, which is a worſe conſequence, if this doctrine be admitted, we can have no ſufficient aſſurance, that the Chriſtian doctrine is a divine revelation: for the aſſurance of that depending upon the aſſurance we have of the miracles ſaid to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the aſſurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of our ſenſes, it is very plain, that that doctrine which

which takes away the certainty of ſenſe, does in ſo doing overthrow the certainty of Chriſtian religion. And what can be more vain, than to pretend, that a man may be aſſured, that ſuch a doctrine is revealed by God, and conſequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no aſſurance at all of any divine revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted, we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder, that any man who conſiders the natural conſequences of this doctrine, can be a Papiſt, unleſs he have attained to Mr. Creſſy's pitch of learning; who, ſpeaking of the difficult arguments wherewith this doctrine was preſſed, ſays plainly, (*Exomol. c.* 73. § 7.), "I muſt anſwer "freely and ingenuouſly, that I have not learned to an- "ſwer ſuch arguments, but to deſpiſe them." And, if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to ſcorn thoſe objections againſt it which we cannot ſolve; then Chriſtian religion hath no advantage above the vileſt enthuſiaſms; and a Turk may maintain Mahomet and his Alcoran, in oppoſition to Chriſt and his doctrine, againſt all that Grotius, or any other, hath ſaid, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely ſay, "I have not learned to anſwer ſuch ar- "guments, but to deſpiſe them."

§ 10. I will add one inſtance more in another kind, to ſhew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions; and that ſhall be the tradition concerning Pope Joan; than which ſcarce any thing was ever more generally received in the hiſtorical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as teſtifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made uſe of it to the diſadvantage of Popery. Since that time, not only Papiſts deny it, but ſeveral of our own writers ceaſe to believe it. Phil. Bergomenſis tells the ſtory thus: "*Anno* "858, John, the 7th Pope, *&c.* The tradition is, that "this perſon was a woman, *&c.*" Here is an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "In deteſtation of whoſe "filthineſs, and to perpetuate the memory of her name, "the Popes, even to this day, going on proceſſion with "the people and clergy, when they come to the place "of her travail, *&c.* in token of abomination, they "turn from it, and go a by-way; and, being paſt that

" deteſtable place, they return into the way, and finiſh " their proceſſion." Here is one practical tradition. " And, for avoiding of the like miſcarriages, it was de- " creed, that no one ſhould thereafter be admitted into " St. Peter's chair, *priuſquam per foratam ſedem futuri* " *Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacono Cardinale attrecta-* " *rentur.*" Here is another with a witneſs. Sabellicus relates the ſame, (*Ennead.* 9. *l.* 1.); and moreover ſays, that "this porphyry chair was, in his time, to be " ſeen in the Pope's palace." He adds indeed, that " Platina thinks, that this tradition of Pope Joan was " not faithfully delivered to poſterity. But however, " (ſays he), ſuch a tradition there is concerning the firſt " practical tradition." Platina ſays, that "he may " not deny it." For the ſecond, he thinks "the chair " rather deſigned for a ſtool, for another uſe, *&c.*" He concludes, "Theſe things which I have related are " commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obſcure " authors; therefore I reſolved (ſays he) briefly and " nakedly to ſet them down, leſt I ſhould ſeem too ob- " ſtinately and pertinaciouſly to have omitted that which " almoſt all affirm." It is no wonder, that he ſays the authors of this report were uncertain and obſcure, ſince ſo very few writ any thing in that age. But, ſuppoſe none had writ of it, ſo long as he acknowledges it to have been a general oral tradition, atteſted by a ſolemn and conſtant practice, it has, according to Mr. S.'s principles, greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred books written in that very age. So that here is an oral and practical tradition, continued, we are ſure, for ſome hundreds of years, preſerved and propagated by a ſolemn practice of the Popes, clergy, and people of Rome, in their proceſſions, and by a notorious cuſtom at the election of every Pope; and in a matter of ſo great importance to their religion, (the honour of the ſee of Rome, and the uninterrupted ſucceſſion from St. Peter, being ſo nearly concerned in it), that, had it been falſe, they had been obliged, under pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have uſed all means to have diſcovered the falſity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound, by his own principles, either to allow it for a truth, or elſe to give an account

account when and how it began; which may poſſibly be made out by "we metaphyſicians," (as he ſtyles himſelf and his ſcientifical brethren, *p.* 340.): but I aſſure him it is paſt the ſkill of note-book learning, *p.* 337.

SECT. X. *The fourth anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. IT is not the preſent perſuaſion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath deſcended to them by oral tradition as the ſole rule of it. And this being proved, the ſuppoſition upon which his demonſtration is built, falls to the ground.

And for the proof of this, I appeal to that decree of the council of Trent, (*Decret. primum quartæ ſeſſ.*), in which they declare, that becauſe the "Chriſtian faith "and diſcipline are contained in written books and un-"written traditions, *&c.* therefore they do receive and "honour the books of ſcripture, and alſo tradition, *pari* "*pietatis affectu ac reverentia*, with equal pious affecti-"on and reverence;" which I underſtand not how thoſe do who ſet aſide the ſcripture, and make tradition the ſole rule of their faith. And conſonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romiſh church is, that ſcripture and tradition make up the rule of faith. So the Roman catechiſm, (ſet forth by order of the council of Trent), ſays, (*in præfat.*), that "the ſum of the do-"ctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the word "of God, which is diſtributed into ſcripture and tradi-"tion." Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei*, &c. *l.* 4. *c.* 12.) ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, that "the ſcripture is a rule "of faith, not an entire, but partial one. The entire "rule is the word of God, which is divided into two "partial rules, ſcripture and tradition." According to this, the adequate rule of faith is the word of God, which is contained partly in ſcripture, and partly in the tradition of the church. And that ſcripture is looked upon by them as the principal rule and primary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only ſupplying the defects of ſcripture, as to ſome doctrines and rites not contained in ſcripture, muſt be evident to any one that has been converſant in the chief of their controverſial divines.

Bellarmine, (*De verbo Dei non ſcripto. l.* 4. *c.* 9.), where he gives the marks of a divine tradition, ſpeaks to this purpoſe, that that which they call a divine tradition, is ſuch a doctrine or rite as is not found in ſcripture, but embraced by the whole church; and for that reaſon believed to have deſcended from the Apoſtles. And he tells us farther, (*ibid. c.* 11.), that the Apoſtles committed all to writing which was commonly and publickly preached; and that all things are in ſcripture which men are bound to know and believe explicitly: but then he ſays, that there were other things which the Apoſtles did not commonly and publickly teach; and theſe they did not commit to writing, but delivered them only by "word of mouth to the Prelates and Prieſts, and perfect men of the church." And theſe are the Apoſtolical traditions he ſpeaks of. Cardinal Perron ſays, (*Reply, obſervat.* 3. *c.* 4.), that "the ſcripture is the foundation of the Chriſtian doctrine, either mediately or immediately. And that the authority of unwritten tradition is founded in general on theſe ſentences of the Apoſtle, *Hold the traditions*, &c. 2 Theſſ. ii. 15.; again, *The things which thou haſt heard of me among many witneſſes, commit to faithful men*, &c." 2 Tim. ii. 2. And that "the authority of the church to preſerve, and eſpecially to declare theſe, is founded in this propoſition, *viz. That the church is the pillar and ground of truth*," 1 Tim. iii. 15. So that, according to him, the primary rule of faith is the ſcripture, "in which the authority of tradition is founded." Mr. Knott (*Charity maintained, c.* 2. § 1.) ſays expreſsly, "We acknowledge the holy ſcripture to be a moſt perfect rule, for as much as a writing can be a rule; we only deny that it excludes either divine tradition, though it be unwritten; or an external judge, to keep, to propoſe, to interpret it, *&c.*" So that, according to him, ſcripture is a perfect rule; only it does not exclude unwritten tradition, *&c.* By which that he does not underſtand, as Mr. S. does, a concurrent oral tradition of all the ſame doctrines which are contained in ſcripture, but other doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he ſays elſewhere, (*Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, c.* 2. § 170.), "We do not diſtinguiſh tra-

"dition

"dition from the written word, becauſe tradition is not "written by any, or in any book or writing; but be- "cauſe it is not written in the ſcripture or Bible." Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei*, &c. *l.* 4. *c.* 2.) alſo ſays the ſame. And as for the interpreting of ſcripture, he tells us, that this is not the office of a rule, but of a judge. "There is (ſays he, *Charity maintained*, *c.* 2. § 3.) a "great and plain diſtinction between a judge and a rule: "for as in a kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, "which are the received laws and cuſtoms; which are "not fit or able to declare, and be judges themſelves, "but that office muſt belong to a living judge: ſo the "holy ſcripture is and may be a rule, but cannot be a "judge." Here he makes the ſcripture as much a rule for matters of faith, as the laws of the land are for civil matters. And, in his *Reply to Mr. Chillingworth*, he hath a chapter of above 150 pages, the title whereof is, *Scripture is not the only rule of faith*; which (had he with Mr. S. believed oral tradition to be the ſole rule of faith) had been as abſurd, as it would be to write a book, to prove, that Turks are not the only Chriſtians in the world. Mr. Creſſy likewiſe (not very conſiſtently to himſelf) lays down this concluſion, (*Exomolog. c.* 20.), "The entire rule of faith is contained not only in ſcri- "pture, but likewiſe in unwritten tradition."

§ 2. Now, all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Ruſhworth's new rule of faith. Therefore Mr. White ſays, (*Tabul. ſuffrag. p.* 96.), "They ſpeak ill who "teach, that ſome things are known in the church from "ſcripture, ſome by tradition." And Dr. Holden (in oppoſition to thoſe who make ſcripture any part of the rule of faith) advances one of the moſt wild and uncharitable poſitions that ever I yet met withal, *viz.* (*Analyſ. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 6.), That "if one ſhould believe all the ar- "ticles of the Catholick faith, &c. for this reaſon, be- "cauſe he thought they were all expreſsly revealed in "ſcripture, or implicitly contained, ſo as they might be "deduced from thence, and would not have believed "them, had he not judged that they might be evinced "from ſcripture: yet this man could be no true Catho- "lick; becauſe (as he tells us afterwards, *c.* 8.) we "muſt receive the Chriſtian doctrine as coming to us by "tradition;

" tradition; for only by this means (excluding the ſcri-
" ptures) Chriſt hath appointed revealed truths to be re-
" ceived and communicated." In the mean time, Cardinal Perron (unleſs he altered his mind) is in a ſad caſe, who believed the authority of tradition itſelf, for this reaſon, becauſe it was founded in ſcripture.

§ 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr. S.'s ſmall party, is fully acknowledged by the traditioniſts themſelves. Dr. Holden ſays, (*l.* 1. *c.* 9.), that " their divines who reſolve faith according to the com-
" mon opinion, do inevitably fall into that ſhameful
" circle, [of proving the divine authority of the ſcripture
" by the church, and the infallibility of the church back
" again by the ſcripture], becauſe they dare not build
" their faith upon the natural evidence and certainty of
" tradition." So that Dr. Holden's way of reſolving faith, is different from the common opinion of their divines; which, he ſays, (*l.* 1. *c.* 3.), " does not dif-
" fer from the opinion of thoſe who reſolve their faith
" into the private ſpirits:" and this (according to Mr. White, *Exetaſ. p.* 70.) is the very way of the Calviniſts, and of the abſurdeſt ſects. Nay, Mr. White ſays farther, *ibid.* that he will be content to " ſuffer all the
" puniſhment that is due to calumniators, if the Roman
" divines (he there ſpeaks of) do not hold the ſame
" rule of faith with the Calviniſts, and all the abſurdeſt
" ſects." So that it ſeems that the Calviniſts, *&c.* do not in their rule of faith differ from the Papiſts, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. *&c.* Now, the divines he there ſpeaks of, are the cenſors of doctrines at Rome, according to whoſe advice his infallible Holineſs, and the Cardinals of the inquiſition, do uſually proceed in cenſuring of doctrines. Concerning theſe divines he goes on to expoſtulate in this manner, (*ibid. p.* 73.), " Shall we endure theſe men to ſit as cenſors and judges
" of faith, who agree with hereticks in the very firſt
" principle which diſtinguiſhes Catholicks from here-
" ticks?" Again, *p.* 144. " Theſe are thy gods, O
" Rome! upon theſe thou dependeſt, whilſt prating
" ignorance triumphs in the Roman college." And he ſays the ſame likewiſe of the generality of their ſchool-divines,

divines, whom he calls ſcepticks, becauſe they do not own his demonſtrative way: inſomuch that he tells us, *p.* 64. that "few ſound parts are left uninfected with "this plague of ſcepticiſm;" that "this is an univer-"ſal gangrene," *p.* 149.; that "there are but few that "go the way of demonſtration, and theſe are either "wearied out, or elſe live retiredly, or deſpair of any "remedy of theſe things," *p.* 67. 68. And indeed all along that book he bemones himſelf and his traditionary brethren as a deſolate and forlorn party, who have truth on their ſide, but want company and encouragement. So he tells us, *p.* 101. that "the true ſcientifi-"cal divines dare not profeſs their knowledge, leſt they "ſhould be expoſed by the ſophiſters of their church to "the deriſion and ſcorn, either of their judges, or of "the people."

§ 4. So that, upon examination of the whole matter, it appears, that Mr. S's demonſtration proceeds upon a falſe ſuppoſition, that it is the perſuaſion of their preſent church that tradition is the ſole rule of faith. For there is no ſuch matter; unleſs Mr. S. mean by their church, a few private perſons, who are looked upon by thoſe who have the chief power in their church, as heretical: as we may reaſonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome againſt Mr. White; many of whoſe books are there condemned, as "containing things ma-"nifeſtly heretical, erroneous in the faith, raſh, ſcan-"dalous, ſeditious, and falſe reſpectively, *&c.*" (*Exetaſt. p.* 9.): and all this done, notwithſtanding that the chief ſubject of thoſe books is the explication and defence of this moſt Catholick principle, "That oral "tradition is the only rule of faith." To ſum up then the whole buſineſs: If nothing be to be owned for Chriſtian doctrine, (as the traditioniſts ſay), but what is the general perſuaſion of thoſe who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the Roman Catholick church; then much leſs can this principle, "That oral tradition "is the ſole rule of faith," which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Chriſtian doctrine, be received as deſcended from Chriſt and his Apoſtles; ſince it is ſo far from being the general perſuaſion of that church at the preſent, that it has been, and ſtill is generally

nerally disowned. But Mr. White has a salvo for this: For although he grants, (*Apol. p.* 38.), that "very "many of their schoolmen maintain, that tradition is "necessary only for some points not clearly expressed "in scripture; whence (he says) it seems to follow, "that they build not the whole body of their faith up- "on tradition: yet (he tells us) there is a vast diffe- "rence betwixt relying on tradition, and saying or "thinking we do so." Suppose there be; yet I hope, that mens saying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's surmise to the contrary is, that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is, in in effect, to say, that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have, that they do not. Besides, how is this rule "self-evident to all, even to the rude "vulgar, as to its ruling power," (as Mr. S. affirms it is), when the greatest part even of the learned among them think and say, that it is not the only rule? But Mr. White (*ib. p.* 39.) endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a similitude, which is to this sense: As the scepticks, who deny this principle, "That contra- "dictions cannot be true at once," yet in their lives and civil actions proceed as if they owned it; so the schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the only rule of faith, yet by resolving their faith into the church, which owns this principle, they do also in practice own it, though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned Papists are just such Catholicks as the scepticks are dogmatists; that is, a company of absurd people, that confute their principles by their practice. According to this reasoning, I perceive the Protestants will prove as good Catholicks as any; for they do not only think and say, that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath passed his word for them: for he assures us, *p.* 30. & 31. (and we may rely upon a man that writes nothing but demonstration), that, "if we look narrowly "into the bottom of our hearts, we shall discover the "natural method of tradition to have unawares settled "our judgments concerning faith; however, when our "other concerns awake design in us, we protest against "it,

" it, and ſeem perhaps to our unreflecting ſelves to em-
" brace and hold to the mere guidance of the letter of
" ſcripture." So that, in reality, we are as good Catholicks, and as true holders to tradition, as any Papiſts of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts, and in our ſettled judgment: however we have taken up an humour to proteſt againſt it, and may ſeem perhaps to our unreflecting ſelves to be Proteſtants.

§ 5. Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to his two great arguments; or, as he (good man) unfortunately calls them, demonſtrations, *p.* 173.; which yet, to ſay truth, are not properly his, but the author of Ruſhworth's dialogues; the main foundation of which book is the ſubſtance of theſe demonſtrations. Only, before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a paſſage of Mr. S.'s, wherein he tells his readers, *p.* 163. that they are not " obliged to bend their brains to ſtu-
" dy his book with that ſeverity as they would do an
" Euclid;" meaning perhaps one of Mr. White's Euclids: for it does not appear by his way of demonſtration, that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true Euclid, I ſuppoſe any one that hath taſted his writings, will, at the reading of Mr. S.'s, unbend his brains without bidding, and ſmile to ſee himſelf ſo demurely diſcharged from a ſtudy ſo abſurd and ridiculous.

Sect. XI. *Concerning ſome other advantages of tradition,* &c.

§ 1. I Should now take into conſideration his ninth diſcourſe, in which he pretends to " open the in-
" comparable ſtrength of the church's human authori-
" ty, and the advantages which accrue to it by the ſu-
" pernatural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt;" but that there is nothing material in it which hath not been anſwered already. Only, I deſire him to explain, how the ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt can, according to his principles, add to our aſſurance of the certainty of tradition: becauſe we can have no greater certainty of the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, than we have, that there is an Holy Ghoſt; and of this we can have no certainty, (according to Mr. S.), but

but by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itſelf can infallibly aſſure us, that there are ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt, then a man muſt know, that tradition is infallible, antecedently to his knowledge of any ſupernatural aſſiſtance. And if ſo, what can any ſupernatural aſſiſtance add to my aſſurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do ſuppoſe to be infallible before I can know of any ſupernatural aſſiſtance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build firſt all our certainty of the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt upon the certainty of tradition; and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt? as if that could contribute to our aſſurance of the certainty of tradition; which, unleſs tradition be firſt ſuppoſed certain, is itſelf wholly uncertain.

§ 2. The concluſion of this ninth diſcourſe is ſomewhat ecſtatical; poſſibly from a ſudden diſorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to ſee what a man he has made himſelf, (with the help of Ruſhworth's dialogues); or rather, what his party has made him by the office they put upon him: for it ſeems (by his telling, *p.* 165. & 166) Mr. Creſſy, and the reſt, are ordained to cajole the fools, leaving him the way of reaſon and principles; and that himſelf is choſen out, to demonſtrate to the wiſe, or thoſe who judge of things *per altiſſimas cauſas*. In the diſcharge of which glorious office, he declares, that he intends no confutation of thoſe authors which Mr. Creſſy and others have meddled with: "yet if any will be ſo "charitable as to judge he hath ſolidly confuted them, "becauſe he hath radically and fundamentally over-"thrown all their arguments, *&c.* he ſhall rejoice, and "be thankful." That the intelligent reader (for he writes to none but ſuch, *p.* 159.) may alſo rejoice with him, I ſhall recite the whole paſſage: for it is thick of demonſtration, and as likely as any in his book to have the *altiſſimas cauſas* contained in it.

§ 3. "It would require a large volume to unfold par-"ticularly how each virtue contributes to ſhew the iner-"rable indeficiency of tradition, and how the principles "of almoſt each ſcience are concerned in demonſtrating "its

" its certainty. Arithmetick lends her numbering and " multiplying faculty, to ſcan the vaſt number of teſti- " fiers: Geometry, her proportions, to ſhew a kind of " infinite ſtrength of certitude in Chriſtian tradition, a- " bove thoſe atteſtations which breed certainty in hu- " man affairs: Logick, her ſkill, to frame and make us " ſee the connexions it has with the principles of our " underſtanding: Nature, her laws of motion and acti- " on: Morality, her firſt principle, That nothing is done " *gratis* by a cognoſcitive nature; and that the body of " traditionary doctrine is moſt conformable to practical " reaſon: Hiſtorical prudence clears the impoſſibility of " an undiſcernible revolt from points ſo deſcended, and " held ſo ſacred: Politicks ſhew this to be the beſt way " imaginable to convey down ſuch a law as it concerns " every man to be ſkilful in: Metaphyſicks engages the " eſſences of things, and the very notion of being, which " fixes every truth; ſo eſtabliſhing the ſcientifical know- " ledge which ſpring from each particular nature, by " their firſt cauſes or reaſons, exempt from changes or " motion: Divinity demonſtrateth it moſt worthy God, " and moſt conducive to bring mankind to bliſs: Laſt- " ly, Controverſy evidences the total uncertainty of " any thing concerning faith, if this can be uncertain; " and makes uſe of all the reſt, to eſtabliſh the certainty " of this firſt principle," *p.* 93. A very fit concluſion for ſuch demonſtrations as went before. It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent readers; for were it not a thouſand pities, that ſo manly, and ſolid, and convincing a diſcourſe as this ſhould be caſt away upon fools?

SECT. XII. *Mr. S.'s corollaries conſidered.*

§ 1. AS for his corollaries, ſuppoſing them to be rightly deduced from his former diſcourſes, they muſt of neceſſity fall with them; for they ſignify nothing, but upon this ſuppoſition, that his foregoing diſcourſes are true. And yet this being granted, it were eaſy to ſhew that moſt of them are groſsly faulty. For, firſt, ſeveral of them are plainly coincident. The ſecond, *viz.* " None can with right pretend to be a church, but the

" followers of tradition," is the very ſame in ſenſe with the 11th, *viz.* " No company of men hang together like " a body of a Chriſtian commonwealth or church, but " that which adheres to tradition." So likewiſe the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th; the 16th and 17th, in the 19th; the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, in the 21ſt; and the 32d and 34th, in the 31ſt. Secondly, Divers of them are manifeſtly abſurd; as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the ſum of which is, That there is " no arguing againſt tradition " from ſcripture, or the authority of the church, or fa- " thers and councils, or from hiſtory and teſtimonial " writings, or from contrary tradition, or reaſon, or " any inſtances whatſoever;" which is as much as to ſay, If this propoſition be true, " That tradition is cer- " tain," then it cannot, by any kind of argument, be proved to be falſe. But is this any peculiar conſectary from the truth of this propoſition? Doth not the ſame follow from every propoſition, That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be falſe? Yet no man was ever yet ſo frivolous, as to draw ſuch a conſequence from the ſuppoſed truth of any propoſition. His 23d alſo is ſingularly abſurd, That " there is no poſſibility of arguing at " all againſt tradition rightly underſtood, or the living " voice of the Catholick church, with any ſhew of rea- " ſon." Theſe are large words. It might have contented a reaſonable man to have ſaid, that no good argument could be brought againſt it: but he is jealous of his hypotheſis, and can never think it ſafe till it be ſhot-free. Nor will that content him; but it muſt be alſo impoſſible for any one to make a ſhew of ſhooting at it. This were, I confeſs, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S.'s diſcourſes above other mens, if they were, as he ſays, by evidence of demonſtration ſo ſecured, that not only no ſubſtantial argument could be brought againſt them, but that even the moſt ſubtile ſchoolman of them all ſhould not be able to come near them with ſo much as a *Videtur quod non*. But it may be, he means no more by this corollary, than what he ſaid in the 18th, *viz.* That " no " ſolid argument from reaſon can be brought againſt " tradition." If ſo, then the ſenſe of his 23d corollary muſt be this, That there is no poſſibility of arguing

at

at all againſt tradition with any ſolid ſhew, or ſubſtantial ſhadow of reaſon; which would be a little inconvenient. I will inſtance but in one more, his 40th; which is this, "The knowledge of tradition's certainty is the firſt "knowledge or principle in controverſial divinity, *i. e.* "without which nothing is known or knowable in that "ſcience:" which is to infer, that becauſe he hath with much pains proved the certainty of tradition, therefore it is ſelf-evident, *i. e.* needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the preſent matter in controverſy, and that which is the main debate of his book, to be the firſt principle in controverſial divinity, *i. e.* ſuch a propoſition as every one ought to grant, before he can have any right to diſpute about it. This is a very prudent courſe, to make begging the queſtion the firſt principle in controverſy; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind, that the method he takes would be the beſt way to make controverſy a ſcience; becauſe he that ſhould have the luck or boldneſs to beg firſt, would have it in his power to make what he pleaſed certain.

§ 2. Were it worth while, I might farther purſue the abſurdities of his corollaries: for they are not ſo terrible as he makes ſhew of, by his telling Dr. Caſaubon, *p.* 330. that "*Sure-footing*, and its corollaries, may put him out "of his wits:" which though intended for an affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and fantaſtical ſtuff be apt to diſorder a very learned head, then ſo far Mr. S.'s ſaying may have truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 41ſt corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural conſectaries from the doctrine of his book.

1. No man can certainly underſtand the meaning of any book whatſoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition: for the arguments whereby he and Mr. Ruſhworth endeavour to prove it impoſſible without tradition to attain to the certain ſenſe of ſcripture, do equally extend to all other books.

2. The memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preſerved by general rumour, than by publick records: for this is the plain Engliſh of that aſſertion,

That oral tradition is a better and more ſecure way of conveyance than writing.

3. That the generality of Papiſts are no Chriſtians: for if, as he aſſirms, tradition be the ſole rule of faith, and thoſe who diſown this rule be *ipſo facto* cut off from the root of faith, *i. e.* unchriſtianed; and if, as I have ſhewn, the generality of Papiſts do diſown this rule, then it is plain that they are no Chriſtians.

PART IV.

Teſtimonies concerning the rule of faith.

SECT. I. *Mr. S.'s teſtimonies examined.*

§ 1. THus far, in the way of reaſon and principles. The reſt is note-book learning, which, he tells us, *p.* 337. he is "not much a friend to:" and there is no kindneſs loſt; for it is as little a friend to him, and his cauſe, as he can be to it. I ſhall firſt examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce expreſs teſtimonies in behalf of ſcripture. In both which I ſhall be very brief; in the one, becauſe his teſtimonies require no long anſwer; in the other, becauſe it would be to little purpoſe to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers; who, for ought appears by his book, is acquainted with none but Father White; as I ſhall ſhew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the courſe he uſes to take with other mens teſtimonies; becauſe it is the only way that a man in his circumſtances can take: otherwiſe nothing can be in itſelf more unreaſonable, than to pretend to anſwer teſtimonies by ranking them under ſo many faulty heads; and having ſo done, magiſterially to require his adverſary to vindicate them, by ſhewing that they do not fall under ſome of thoſe heads, though he have not ſaid one word againſt any of them particularly: nay, though he have not ſo much as recited any one of them; for then the trick would be ſpoiled, and his Catholick reader, who perhaps may believe him in the general, might ſee reaſon not to do ſo, if he ſhould deſcend to particulars; which,

which, as he well obſerves, *p.* 161. would make his "diſcourſe to look with a contingent face."

§ 2. I begin with his three authorities from ſcripture; which when I conſider, I ſee no reaſon why he, of all men, ſhould find fault with my Lord Biſhop of Down's diſſuaſive, *p.* 320. for being ſo "thin and ſlight in ſcri-"pture-citations." Nor do I ſee how he will anſwer it to Mr. Ruſhworth, for tranſgreſſing that prudent rule of his, (*Dial.* 2. § 14.), *viz.* That "the Catholick ſhould "never undertake to convince his adverſary out of ſcri-"pture, *&c.*" For which he gives this ſubſtantial rea-ſon, *ibid.* "Becauſe this were to ſtrengthen his opponent "in his own ground and principle, *viz.* That all is to "be proved out of ſcripture;" which he tells us preſently after is no more fit to convince, than "a "beetle is to cut withal;" meaning it perhaps of texts ſo applied as theſe which follow. *This ſhall be to you a direct way, ſo that fools cannot err in it,* If. xxxv. 8. *This is my covenant with them, ſaith the Lord, My ſpirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, ſhall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy ſeed, and from the mouth of thy ſeed's ſeed, from henceforth for ever,* If. lix. 21. *I will give my law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it,* Jer. xxxi. 33. From which texts if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philoſophers ſtone, or the longitude, may be proved from the firſt chapter of Geneſis, I am content they ſhould paſs for valid teſtimonies; though I might require of him, by his own law, before theſe texts can ſignify any thing to his purpoſe, to demonſtrate that this is the traditionary ſenſe of theſe texts, and that it hath been univerſally in all ages received by the church under that notion; and then to ſhew how it comes to paſs that ſo many of the fathers, and of their own commentators, have interpret-ed them to another ſenſe; and, laſtly, to ſhew how ſcripture, which has no certain ſenſe but from tradition, and of the ſenſe whereof tradition cannot aſſure us, un-leſs it be the rule of faith; I ſay, how ſcripture can prove tradition to be the rule of faith, which can prove no-thing at all, unleſs tradition be firſt proved to be the rule of faith. This I take to be as ſhameful a circle as

that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§ 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils; all which, not one of them excepted, he hath taken out of Mr. White's *Tabulæ ſuffragiales*, without the leaſt acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not conſulted the books themſelves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very ſame errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that, though he is pleaſed to ſay of himſelf, *p.* 239. that "he is a bad tranſcriber," yet I muſt do him that right, to aſſure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

§ 4. He begins with councils; of which, he tells us, "he will only mention three in ſeveral ages."

The firſt is the firſt ſynod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in ſeveral ages, he ſhould have produced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near 300 years before the Lateran. But there was a good reaſon why the Lateran ſhould be firſt produced, *viz.* becauſe it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well: but what ſays this ſynod? "We all confeſs unanimouſly, and "conſequently with one heart and mouth, the tenets "and ſayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, "ſubſtracting nothing of thoſe things which are deli-"vered us by them: and we believe as the fathers have "believed; we preach ſo as they have taught." The force of which teſtimony Mr. S. lays upon the word *delivered*, as if that word, where-ever it is met with in councils or fathers, muſt needs be underſtood of oral delivery: whereas it is a general word, indifferently uſed for conveyance, either by writing, or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of teſtimonies againſt the hereſy of the Monothelites had been read juſt before this declaration of the ſynod. Now, what ſignifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this ſynod declares her faith, in oppoſition to the hereſy of the Monothelites, to be conſonant in all things to thoſe

thoſe teſtimonies which had been produced out of the fathers?

The next is the council of Sardica; out of an epiſtle of which council he cites theſe words: "We have re- "ceived this doctrine; we have been taught ſo; we "hold this Catholick tradition, faith, and confeſſion." Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this council was rejected by St. Auſtin, and other orthodox fathers; as Binius acknowledges, (*Concil. tom.* 1.); and, which is more, that the latter part of this epiſtle, out of which part Mr. S. cites theſe words, which contains a confeſſion of faith, is, by Baronius, *anno* 347, and, after him, by Binius, proved to have been ſurreptiouſly added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen; yet Baronius thinks, that it was the Arian confeſſion, compoſed by the falſe ſynod of Sardica which ſat at the ſame time; and that Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps miſtook it for the confeſſion of the orthodox ſynod of the ſame name. However that be, he proves out of Athanaſius, and from the teſtimony both of the Eaſtern and Weſtern Biſhops, that the council of Sardica "did not ſo much as add one "word or tittle, no nor ſo much as explain any thing "in the Nicene faith." But Mr. White ſays nothing of this; and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no ſpeculator in theſe matters, but only, as a teſtifier, delivers down theſe authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. White; and if the word *tradition* be but in them, they are demonſtrative.

As for his teſtimonies from the ſecond council of Nice, (which he calls the ſeventh general council), who pretended their doctrine of image-worſhip to have deſcended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it moſt doughtily by texts of ſcripture ridiculouſly wreſted, by impertinent ſayings out of obſcure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodeſt ſtories (as is acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI. *Quodlibet 6. cited by Eſpencæus in 2. epiſt. ad Tim. c. 4.*) of apparitions and womens dreams, *&c.* for which I refer the reader to the council itſelf; which is ſuch a meſs of ſopperies, that if

a general council of Atheiſts had met together with a deſign to abuſe religion, by talking ridiculouſly concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I ſay, as for his teſtimonies from this council, I ſhall refer Mr. S. to that Weſtern council under Charles the Great, which a little after at Francfort condemned, and alſo fully confuted the deciſions of this council, calling their pretended tradition of image-worſhip *putidiſſimam traditionem*, "a moſt ſtinking tradition."

Theſe are his authorities from councils: "Where "(ſays he) we ſee general councils relying on the teach-"ing of the fathers or foregoing church, and on the "church's tradition as their rule, *&c.*" Where does he ſee any ſuch matter? or where does he ſee general councils? Was the council of Lateran a general one? Or was the council of Sardica? If it was, let him ſhew how the ſecond of Nice could be the ſeventh general council. Mr. White muſt write more explicitly, and ſay which are general councils, which not; otherwiſe he will lead his friends into dangerous miſtakes.

§ 4. "After ancient councils, (not ſo ancient nei-"ther), let us (ſays he) give a glance at fathers." *Glance* is a modeſt word, and yet I doubt whether ever the fathers had ſo much as that from him. Before I ſpeak particularly to his teſtimonies from the fathers, I ſhall mind him of what Mr. Ruſhworth ſays in general, (*Dial.* 3. § 13.), *viz.* that "he who ſeeks tradition in "the fathers, and to evince it by their teſtimony, takes "an hard taſk upon him, *&c.*" Again, *ibid.* "As in "other points, ſo even in this of the reſolution of faith, "as doctors ſeem to differ now-a-days, ſo might the "fathers alſo." If this be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few teſtimonies out of the fathers to prove, that tradition is the ſole rule of faith. But let us ſee what he has done towards it.

He begins with a ſaying of Pope Celeſtine to the fathers of the Epheſine council. "Now therefore we "muſt act with a common endeavour to preſerve things "believed and retained to this very time by ſucceſſion "from the Apoſtles." Binius's other reading [of διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite ſpoils the force of this citation which Mr. S. puts upon the word *ſucceſſion*. But read

read it how he will, why may not the Chriſtian doctrine be ſaid to come by ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles, when it is tranſmitted to us by ſcripture, as well as when by oral tradition? I am ſure the ſame Celeſtine, in an epiſtle to Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by ſcripture: "This (ſays he) is a great triumph of our faith, "to demonſtrate our opinions ſo ſtrongly, and to over-"throw the contrary, by teſtimonies from ſcripture." And neither in this epiſtle, nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus: "But "what if the Apoſtles had not left us the ſcriptures, "ought we not to follow the order of tradition? *&c.*" This makes clearly againſt him; for it implies, that now the Apoſtles have left us the ſcriptures, we ought to follow them. The other paſſage he cites out of Irenæus, *lib.* 1. *c.* 3. is a clear eviction that he did not conſult the book. For he puts two ſayings together, which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and becauſe Mr. White had cited *lib.* 1. *c.* 3. for the firſt ſaying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an *Et rurſus*, "Again, *&c.*;" therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right traditionary temper, which is, to take things eaſily upon truſt himſelf, and require demonſtration from others) concluded, that theſe ſayings were in the ſame place, though in truth they are in ſeveral books. As for the teſtimony itſelf, there is nothing in it to Mr. S.'s purpoſe beſides the word *tradition*, which Irenæus does often apply to ſcripture as well as oral tradition; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His teſtimonies out of Origen will do him leſs ſtead: for every one that hath been converſant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by the church's tradition preſerved by order of ſucceſſion, *viz.* the myſtical interpretations of the ſcripture, which (he ſays) were delivered by the Apoſtles to the governors of the church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends for, Origen is at his ſervice; if it be not, I aſſure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as alſo Origen) the Papiſt upon occaſion thinks it enough to reply

ply in St. Hierom's words, (*Adverſ. Helvid.*), "As for "Tertullian, I have nothing to ſay of him, but that he "is not a man of the church." Whatever he was, theſe are his words, "If thou beeſt but a Chriſtian, believe "what is *traditum*, delivered." And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have ſaid) is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumſtances do not determine it to one, as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. S.) to the ſcripture. For he diſputes here againſt Marcion, who denied the fleſh of Chriſt; and who, to maintain that, denied his nativity, and expunged the whole hiſtory of it out of the goſpel *: "But "(ſaith Tertullian) by what authority doeſt thou this? "If thou be a Prophet, foretel ſomething; if an Apo- "ſtle, preach publickly; if Apoſtolical, be of the Apo- "ſtles mind; if no more but a Chriſtian, believe what "is delivered." And where delivered, but in thoſe inſtruments or books of the goſpel, out of which (as Tertullian immediately before tells us) Marcion had made bold to expunge this ſtory?

As for his teſtimonies out of Athanaſius, the two firſt of them prove nothing, but that faith comes down from our anceſtors, or was by them delivered to us; which no body denies: nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in oppoſition to written tradition. The third teſtimony is out of an epiſtle to Epictetus, to whom Athanaſius, writing concerning thoſe who held Chriſt's body to be conſubſtantial with his divinity, tells him, this was ſo groſs a conceit, that it needed no ſolicitous confutation; but that it would be a ſufficient anſwer to ſay in general, "The orthodox church was not of that "mind; our fathers did not think ſo." From whence Mr. S. infers, that "tradition is held by him a ſole ſuf- "ficient rule of faith, and the only anſwer to be given "why we reject points from faith, *&c.*" But if he had conſulted the book, he would not have inferred, that this was "the only anſwer to be given, *&c.*" for it immediately follows, "But leſt from our being wholly ſilent, "the inventers of evil things ſhould take occaſion to

* *His opinor conſiliis, tot originalia inſtrumenta Chriſti delere Marcion auſus eſt, ne caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate,* &c.

"be

" be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few paſ-
" ſages out of ſcripture, *&c.*" And from thence he confutes them at large. It was ſo groſs an error, that he thought it might be ſufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of ſcripture againſt it, to ſay, that it was contrary to the ancient faith: but yet, leſt they ſhould (if he had ſaid no more) have taken boldneſs from thence, and thought that nothing more could be ſaid againſt it; therefore he confutes it from particular texts of ſcripture. And what, in his opinion, was the ſufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have ſeen at the beginning of this epiſtle, from theſe words: " That faith
" which was profeſſed by the fathers in that council,
" (*viz.* the Nicene), according to the ſcripture, is to
" me ſufficient, *&c.*" It ſeems that ſcripture was to him the rule and ſtandard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

Mr. S. ſays he will be ſhorter in the reſt. And ſo will I: for what is to be ſaid to teſtimonies brought at a venture; when he that brings them, had he read the books themſelves, could not have had the face to have brought them? Such is this out of Clem. Alexand. (*Stromat. l.* 7.), " As if one of a man becomes a beaſt,
" like thoſe infected with Circe's poiſon; ſo he hath
" forfeited his being a man of God, and faithful to our
" Lord, who ſpurns againſt eccleſiaſtical tradition, and
" leaps into opinions of human election." Mr. S. knows whoſe way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midſt of a text that ſounds ſomething towards his purpoſe, and leave out the reſt, which would make it evident to be meant juſt contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whoſe implicit faith, were it not for his culpable ignorance, might excuſe him. But for his ſeducer, Mr. White, how he can acquit himſelf of ſo foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous Papiſt to judge, when I have nakedly ſet the whole paſſage before him. Clement, ſpeaking of hereticks who relinquiſh the ſcripture, or abuſe it, by wreſting it to their luſts, ſays, " Men who deal in matters of higheſt im-
" portance, muſt need commit great errors, if they do
" not take and hold the RULE OF FAITH from
" truth itſelf. For ſuch men having once deviated from
" the

" the right way, do likewiſe err in moſt particulars; " probably becauſe they have not the faculty of diſtin- " guiſhing truths and falſhoods perfectly exerciſed, to " chuſe what ought to be choſen: for, if they had this, " they would be ruled by the divine SCRIPTURES. " [Therefore, as if any of mankind ſhould become a " beaſt, in ſuch ſort as thoſe who were φαρμακχθεῖσιν, " bewitched by Circe; even ſo he hath loſt his being a " man of God, and abiding faithful to the Lord, who " hath ſpurned againſt the tradition of the church, and " ſkipped into the opinions of human ſects, αἱρέσεων,]; " (not of human election, as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. " White, does moſt abſurdly tranſlate it): but he that " hath returned from his errors, and hearkened to the " SCRIPTURES, and conformed his life to the " truth, is as it were advanced from a man to a God." At the ſame rate he goes on for ſeveral pages together, taking the ſcriptures for an indemonſtrable principle, from which all divine doctrines are to be demonſtrated, and for the criterion whereby they are to be tried; and charges the hereticks in ſuch words as we cannot find fitter for our adverſaries: " As (ſays he) naughty boys ſhut " out their ſchoolmaſter, ſo theſe drive the prophecies " out of the church, ſuſpecting that they will chide and " admoniſh them; and they patch together abundance of " falſhoods and fictions, that they may ſeem RATI- " ONALLY not to admit the ſcriptures." Again, ſpeaking of thoſe hereticks affronting the ſcriptures, he tells us, " they oppoſe the θεῖα παραδόσει, di- " vine tradition, with human doctrines, δι' ἑτέρων πα- " ραγχειρήσεων, by other traditions, [delivered from hand " to hand], that they may eſtabliſh a ſect or hereſy." Again, he ſays, " they adulterate the truth, and ſteal the " rule of faith, &c.; but for ORAL frauds they ſhall " have WRITTEN puniſhments." But enough of this. Whoſoever deſires to ſee more of it, let him read on where theſe men, to their own ſhame, have directed us, and ſee whether any Proteſtant can ſpeak more fully and plainly in this controverſy. The whole truſt of the Papiſts is upon the equivocal ſenſe of the word *tradition*. Which word is commonly uſed by the fathers to ſignify to us the ſcripture or divine tradition, as Clement

ment here calls it: but the Papists understand it of their unwritten tradition; and to this they apply all those passages in the fathers where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the testimonies I have already examined: and there is nothing of argument in those few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word: which I need not shew of every one of them in particular; for whosoever shall read them with this key, will find, that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§ 5. As for his citations out of thē council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith, I have already shewn, that that council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal, in an *&c.* those choaking words, in which the council declares itself to "receive and honour, with e-"qual pious affection and revereuce, the books of scri-"pture and unwritten traditions." And, after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at last gives of that council's putting scripture constantly before tradition; Because scripture being interpreted by tradition, is of the same authority, "as if an Apostle or an E-"vangelist were present; and therefore no wonder they ho-"nour scripture-testimony so as to put it before tradition?" which is to say, that because scripture is subordinate to tradition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if scripture and tradition be but several ways of conveying the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, why should he imagine an Evangelist or Apostle to be more present by the scripture than by oral tradition; especially if it be considered, that he supposes scripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine?

SECT. II. *Testimonies on the behalf of scripture.*

§ 1. ALL that now remains, is, to confirm the precedent discourse, by testimonies of the most eminent persons of the church in several ages. In which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by

that full account which is given of the ſenſe of the ancients in this matter, in the anſwer to *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis;* which Mr. S. may, if he pleaſe, conſult for his farther conviction.

§ 2. I begin with the hiſtorical account which Euſebius gives of committing the goſpel to writing; which is to this purpoſe, (*Hiſt. eccleſ. l.* 2. *c.* 14.), *viz.* that "the Romans were not content with the doctrine "preached, unleſs it were alſo committed to writing; "and therefore did earneſtly beg of Mark, Peter's com- "panion, that he would leave them a monument in "writing of that doctrine which had been delivered to "them by word of mouth. And this was the occaſi- "on of the writing of St. Mark's goſpel. And when "Peter did underſtand, that this work was publiſhed, "being ſuggeſted by the divine revelation of the Holy "Spirit, it is ſaid, he was very much pleaſed with the "ready and earneſt deſire of thoſe perſons; and that, "by his authority, he confirmed this writing, to the "end that it might be every where read in the church." As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us, (*ibid. l.* 3. *c.* 18.), that, "of all the diſciples, they two only "have left monuments in writing; of whom it is al- "ſo reported, that they betook themſelves to write, being "drawn thereto by neceſſity. Matthew, after he had "preached the word of God to the Jews, and was re- "ſolved to go to other nations, wrote his goſpel in "the language of his country; and thus, by the dili- "gence and pains of writing, did abundantly ſupply "the want of his preſence to thoſe whom he left. "And, when Mark and Luke had publiſhed their "goſpel, it is reported, that John, (who had always "uſed to preach the word without writing it), being "at length wrought upon by the ſame reaſon, did be- "take himſelf to write." From this account it is clear, that the Apoſtles thought it neceſſary, for the preſervation and ſecure conveyance of the Chriſtian doctrine, that it ſhould be put into writing; and that they judged this a better way to ſupply the want of their preſence than oral tradition. Therefore the ſame author tells us, (*ibid. c.* 31.), that "the diſciples, who immediately "ſucceeded the Apoſtles, as they travelled to preach the "goſpel

" goſpel to thoſe who had not yet heard the word of " faith, did, with great care, alſo deliver to them the " writings of the holy Evangeliſts." Again, (*ibid.* c. 30.), that " Ignatius, as he travelled towards Rome, " where he was to ſuffer, exhorted the churches of eve- " ry city, to hold faſt the tradition of the Apoſtles; " which, (as alſo by writing he teſtified), for the greater " ſecurity, he held neceſſary to be copied in writing."

§ 3. That the hereticks of old made the ſame pretence which the Papiſts make now, of oral tradition in oppoſition to ſcripture, the ſame Euſebius tells us; and withal, that books are a ſufficient confutation of this pretence. " Thoſe (ſays he, *ibid. l.* 5. *c.* 27.) who were " of the hereſy of Artemon, ſaid, that all their foreſa- " thers, and the Apoſtles themſelves, had received and " taught the ſame things which they alſo did, and had " preſerved the true teaching unto the time of Victor " Biſhop of Rome; whoſe ſucceſſor, Zephyrinus, cor- " rupted it. And this (ſaith he) would have great pro- " bability, were it not firſt of all contradicted by the " ſcripture; and, next, if there did not remain the wri- " tings of other brethren, much more ancient than Vi- " ctor's time, &c. in the books of all whom Chriſt's di- " vinity is acknowledged." And afterwards he tells us, that theſe hereticks did change and corrupt the ſcriptures, to bring them to their opinions. So Mr. S. tells us, that the outward letter of ſcripture ought to be corrected by tradition, and ſenſe written in mens hearts.

St. Hierom alſo tells us, (*Com. in Iſa. c.* 19.) that " the hereticks were wont to ſay, We are the ſons of " the wiſe, who did from the beginning deliver down " to us the apoſtolical doctrine;" but he adds, that " the true ſons of Judah adhere to the ſcripture."

§ 4. That ſcripture is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary.

St. Chryſoſtom, (*in* 2 *Theſſ. c.* 2. *hom.* 4.) " All " things in the divine ſcriptures are plain and ſtraight. " Whatſoever things are neceſſary, are manifeſt."

St. Auſtin, having ſpoken of the profoundneſs of ſcripture, adds, (*Epiſt.* 3.), " Not that thoſe things which " are neceſſary to ſalvation are ſo hard to be come at; " but (ſaith he) when one hath there attained faith,

" without which there is no pious and right living, " there are beſides many dark and myſterious things, " *&c.*" Again, (*ibid.*), " The manner of ſpeech in " ſcripture, how eaſy is it to all, though few can " penetrate to the bottom of it? Thoſe things which " it plainly contains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe, like a " familiar friend, to the heart of the learned and un- " learned." How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception againſt ſcripture? And what theſe things are, which are plainly contained in ſcripture, the ſame father tells us elſewhere, in theſe words: (*De doct. Chriſt. l.* 2. *c.* 9.) " Among thoſe things which are " plainly ſet down in ſcripture, all thoſe things are to " be found which comprehend faith and good manners." The ſame St. Auſtin, (as alſo Clement in the book which Mr. White quoted), for the underſtanding of obſcure texts of ſcripture, directs us not to tradition, but to the plain text, without which, he expreſsly ſays, (*De unitate eccl. c.* 5.), " there would be no way to under- " ſtand them."

§ 5. That ſcripture is ſo plain, as to be fit to determine controverſies.

Juſtin ſure thought ſo, when diſputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition on his ſide, he told him, " he would bring ſuch proofs " [to the contrary] as no man could gainſay. At- " tend (ſays he) to what I ſhall recite out of the ho- " ly ſcriptures; proofs which need not to be explain- " ed, but only to be heard." Mr. White might have found likewiſe much to this purpoſe in his Clement.

But, not to tire my reader in a point which the ancients abound with, I ſhall only produce the judgment of Conſtantine, in that ſolemn oration of his to the council of Nice, (*Theodoret. hiſt. lib.* 1. *c.* 7.), wherein he bewails their " mutual oppoſitions, eſpecially in " divine things;" concerning which, they had the doctrine of the Holy Spirit recorded in writing: " For " (ſays he) the books of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, " and the oracles of the old Prophets, do evidently " teach us what we ought to think of the divine Ma- " jeſty. Therefore, laying aſide all ſeditious contenti- " on, let us determine the matters in queſtion by te- " ſtimonies

" ſtimonies out of the divine writings." Not a word of any other tradition but ſcripture, which was held evident enough in thoſe days, though now Mr. S. tells us, it is not ſufficient to decide that controverſy about the divinity of Chriſt.

§ 6. Laſtly, That ſcripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus, *(l.* 3. *c.* 1.), " The method of our ſalvation we have not known by any other but thoſe men " by whom the goſpel came to us; which then they " preached; but afterwards, by the will of God, delivered it to us in the ſcriptures, to be for the future " the foundation and pillar of our faith."

St. Cyprian the church hath ever held a good Catholick; yet Mr. S. takes notice, *p.* 314. that he erred in a point of faith; and perhaps the rather, becauſe Mr. Ruſhworth had told him, that he was not theirs in this controverſy: " For (ſays he, *Dial.* 3. § 13.) St. " Cyprian ſeems to think, that the reſolution of faith " was to be made into ſcripture, and not into tradition." But that we may not ſeem to accept of this courteſy from him, nor yet wholly to deſpiſe it, I ſhall offer this one teſtimony, inſtead of many, out of that father: who being oppoſed with an argument from tradition, demands, *(Epiſt.* 74.), " Whence have you that " tradition? comes it from the authority of the Lord, " and of the goſpel, or from the epiſtles of the Apoſtles? for God teſtifies, that we are to do thoſe " things which are written, *&c.* If it be commanded " in the goſpel, or contained in the epiſtles or acts of " the Apoſtles, then let us obſerve it as a divine and " holy tradition."

Hilary *(ad Conſtant.)* commends Conſtantius the Emperor " for regulating his faith only according to thoſe " things which are written." And to oblige him to deſerve this commendation, he adds, " He who refuſes this, is antichriſt; and who diſſembles in it, is " anathema."

Optatus, concerning the controverſy with the Donatiſts, *(lib.* 5. *de ſchiſm. Donat.)*, aſks, " Who ſhall be " judge?" and anſwers himſelf, " The Scriptures." Which he illuſtrates by the ſimilitude of a father, who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living; but

but when he was dying, cauſed it to be written in laſting tables, to decide all controverſies that might happen among them after his death. This paſſage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

Baſil, maintaining the doxology as it was uſed in his days, ſays, (*De Spirit. Sancto, c.* 7.), "Thus we received it from our fathers;" but adds immediately, "This is not enough for us, that it is the tradition "of the fathers for they followed the authority of the "ſcriptures, making its teſtimonies the principles upon "which they built." He has indeed in the ſame book, *c.* 27. a paſſage much inſiſted on by the Papiſts concerning unwritten traditions; but withal, he ſays thoſe traditions were ſecretly conveyed; which makes all the reſt of no uſe to Mr. S.

Chryſoſtom (*Hom.* 8. *in Epiſt. ad Heb. c.* 5.) having mentioned ſeveral hereſies, directs how they may be avoided, *viz.* "By attending to the faith delivered, "and looking upon all that diſagrees from that, as "adulterate. For (ſays he) as thoſe who give rules, "do not put men upon a curious inquiry after many "meaſures, but bid them keep to the rule given; ſo is "it in opinions. But no body will attend to the ſcriptures: if we did, we ſhould not only not fall into "errors ourſelves, but alſo reſcue thoſe that are deceived." Again, (*Hom.* 52. *in Joh.*), "If we "would be thoroughly converſant in the ſcriptures, we "ſhould be inſtructed both in right opinions and a "good life." Again, (*Hom.* 33. *in Act. Apoſt.*), "Among the many ſects of Chriſtians, it will be eaſy to "judge of the right, if we believe the ſcriptures, becauſe they are plain and true. If any one agree with "theſe, he is a Chriſtian; if he contradicts them, he "is far from this rule."

St. Auſtin (*De bapt. cont. Donat. l.* 2. *c.* 6.) calls the ſcripture the divine balance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "The holy ſcripture (ſays he) ſaith "the rule of our doctrine." And accordingly himſelf uſes it, both in his diſpute with Maximinus, to whom he ſays, (*contr. Max. l.* 3.), "Neither ought I now to "alledge the Nicene council, nor thou that of Arimi"num; for neither am I bound to the authority of the "one,

" one, nor thou of the other. Let us both conteſt with the " authorities of ſcripture, which are witneſſes common " to us both;" and alſo againſt the Donatiſts in theſe words, (*De unitate eccl. c.* 16.), " Let them, if they " can demonſtrate their church, not by the talk and " rumours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not by " the councils of their own Biſhops, not by the books " of their diſputers, not by deceitful miracles, *&c.* but " by the preſcript of the law, prophets, *&c. i. e.* by " all the canonical authorities of the holy books."

Hierom ſaith, (*Comment. in Agg. c.* 1.), " Of thoſe " things which, without the authorities and teſtimo- " nies of the ſcripture, men invent of their own heads " as from apoſtolical tradition, they are ſmitten with " the ſword of God."

Theophilus Alexander, whom Hierom hath tranſ- lated, calls ſcripture more than once " the rule," and the teſtimonies of it " the firm foundations of doctrine," (*Paſchal. l.* 3.). And again ſaith, (*l.* 2.) " It comes " from a demoniacal ſpirit, that men follow the ſophiſms " of human minds, and think any thing divine that " wants the authority of ſcripture."

Theodoret (*Hæret. fabul. l.* 5.) charges all hereſies upon the not following of ſcripture; which he calls " the inflexible rule of truth." Again, " We have " learned the rule of opinions from the divine ſcri- " pture."

After the fathers, I ſhall produce the teſtimonies of two eminent perſons of later times, Gerſon and Lyra.

Gerſon, in his book *of the trial of doctrines, part* 1. *conſid.* 2. hath this remarkable paſſage: " In the trial " of doctrines, that which is firſt and principally to be " conſidered, is, Whether a doctrine be conformable " to the holy ſcripture? *&c.* The reaſon of this is, " Becauſe the ſcripture is delivered to us as a SUF- " FICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE " for the government of the whole eccleſiaſtical body, " and its members, to the end of the world. So that " it is ſuch an art, ſuch a rule or exemplar, that any " other doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to " be renounced as heretical, or to be accounted ſuſpi- " cious, or not at all appertaining to religion." A-

gain,

gain, (*De distinct. verar. vision. à falsis.*), "It is evi-
"dent how pernicious the rejection of the holy scripture
"is, and how certain a preparatory for the reception
"of antichrist." Once more, (*Serm. in die circumcis. &c.*), "What mischief, what danger, what confu-
"sion hath happened through contempt of the holy scri-
"pture, (which sure is sufficient for the government of
"the church, else Christ must have been an imperfect
"lawgiver), let us ask experience, *&c.*"

Lyra also writes thus, (*Prolog. de lib. Bib. &c.*), "As in philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing
"things to their first and self-evident principles; so in
"the writings delivered by the holy doctors, truth is
"discovered as to matters of faith, by reducing them
"to the canonical scriptures."

SIR,

You know how easy it were to swell up a large volume with testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr. White does, to bale in quotations, though never so impertinent; or use the wretched importunity which Mr. S. does to persuade them to be pertinent. But these testimonies, which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfy an unpassionate reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own eyes and reason. As for that sort of men which chuse to follow noise rather than light, we must be content to leave them to the blind conduct of those guides, who, having no better means to keep their followers to them, go hallooing in the dark, and fill their ears with the insignificant sounds of infallibility, indefectibility, self-evidence, *and* demonstration.

Concerning the Appendix, *wherein you are particularly challenged, I hope for an account very shortly, and so take leave.*

SIR,

Your affectionate friend,

Lincoln's-Inn, Feb. 20. 1665. JOHN TILLOTSON.

The end of the Third Volume.